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THE

No. 78.

# Spanish Treasure

By Elizabeth C. Winter.

(ISABELLA CASTELAR.)

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THE SPANISH TREASURE.







# THE SPANISH TREASURE

A Novel.

BY

MRS. ELIZABETH C. WINTER.

(ISABELLA CASTELAR.)

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# THE SPANISH TREASURE.

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## CHAPTER I.

### A CHANCE MEETING.



IN a damp, unpleasant day, late in the month of February, two young women were hastening through a crowd—for the street was full of people, notwithstanding the dismal weather. The place was the upper part of Broadway, above Madison Square, and both these girls were going in the same direction, toward the north, both walking at the same pace, and keeping the same distance between them, so that an observer might well have fancied that one was in pursuit of the other. This was partly true, although neither was aware of it. The foremost of the girls was handsome, richly and elegantly attired, bright and happy; the other was pale, sad, plainly dressed and, though her face was of the kind that might under exceptional cir-



cumstances become beautiful, it was not now pretty enough to attract even a passing glance.

Any casual passer would have described these two as a fashionable young woman and a poor girl. The first paused as she reached the corner of Thirty-fourth street ; the other girl also paused, a few feet distant. The street was crowded, as it usually is at that time of day, and several surface cars were passing rapidly in various directions. The snow of two days past made a deep, slushy mire, as slippery and dangerous to walk through as it was unpleasant to see. The young lady, who was not accustomed to walking, and had no sense of the danger of that particular crossing, suddenly tossed her little head and, with a slight laugh, plunged forward into the chaos of moving vehicles and horses. The movement was so unexpected that a policeman, who had been coming to her assistance, stood still and gave utterance to a few vehement remarks ; explosive exclamations, apparently from every point of the compass, were blown about through the air ; all sorts of vehicles backed hurriedly and their wheels became interlocked. Several horses performed impromptu circus-feats of standing on their hind-legs, and all the drivers swore loudly, heartily and with much apparent relish. Out of this wild commotion the young lady presently emerged on the other side of the street, her arm closely held in the firm grasp of the poor girl, and both young women were now equally pale.

"I must have been crazy to attempt to cross the street just then," said the former. "I don't know what possessed me to do it. You see, I am not accustomed to being out alone. I left my carriage somewhere here, to go into a store ; then I walked down a few blocks to another store, and James must have missed me. Of course, I ought to have waited till he came up ; he



would have found me again in a minute. But for you, I should have been killed—horribly killed!—crushed and mangled! Oh, how frightened I was! Yes, yes, you have saved my life! And how can I thank you? Surely there is something I can do for you, too—”

She suddenly left off talking about herself and, turning towards the girl, who still held her arm in the same firm clasp, she looked at her over from head to foot with one swift, all-comprehensive feminine glance; and when she spoke again, it was in a softened and gentle voice.

“What can I do for you?” she said. “You have certainly saved my life, and you needn’t be afraid to ask something worth while, for my life is precious to many people, and I value it very much myself.”

The pale girl spoke for the first time, slowly and, as it seemed, with difficulty; but her voice was distinct, though low.

“I don’t know that I value mine as I ought to,” she said, in answer to her companion’s last words; “indeed, I have been trying to think, all day, how I could get rid of it. Perhaps that is why I came to do as I did. But suppose I were to ask you now to save *my* life?”

“Why, I would do it, of course,” was the quick reply; “yes, indeed, at the risk of my own. What’s your name?”

“Dolores Mendoza.”

“What a pretty name! Mine is just plain Polly Hamilton. And were you really going to— But no matter. You look heart-broken and sick and sorry. Where can that James be? Ah, there he is! You may let go of me now, though I do tremble even yet. James, how stupid of you to go and lose me! I was nearly killed and would have been—ah, so horribly!—but for this—lady.”

“I saw it all, miss,” said the alarmed and contrite



James, who, by this time, was holding open the carriage-door. "There was such a jam I couldn't get the horses through one instant sooner, miss. Hope I may die, miss, if my heart wasn't in my mouth when I seed you in under them wheels, miss! The sight fairly left my eyes, an' when I could see again, the young lady had you safe over!"

"That she had, James, and no thanks to you or any other of those howling, frightened, swearing men. Come, Dolores," she added, as she stepped quickly into the carriage, "get in here alongside of me; I'm going to take you home."

Dolores moved towards the carriage; but, as Miss Hamilton instantly perceived, with pain and difficulty.

"Are you hurt?" she cried; "James, lift her."

"Oh, no, please; I can do better alone," said Dolores, and with heroic fortitude she rested her foot a moment on the step and climbed into the carriage. Her pallor increased to ghastliness, and a cold perspiration started out like dew upon her brow and around her pallid lips; and as she sank upon the seat, a groan of anguish escaped her—anguish that could no longer be repressed.

"You are hurt!" exclaimed Miss Hamilton, in great distress.

"A little, not much; the wheel passed over my foot," she murmured. Her head fell back. She had fainted.

"Drive home, James, quick as lightning, and be careful!" cried Miss Hamilton, with the manner that never offended her servants, though it always brought prompt obedience.

She passed an arm under the neck of the insensible girl and gently pillowed the drooping head on her shoulder.

Mary Hamilton was an only child, and from infancy her will had been law in the home where she reigned,



an undisputed queen. When but a mere boy, her father had "found his luck," to borrow his own words, in California in '49 ; and, having a level head and an honest heart, he had managed to hold on to his "luck" when others all around him had either lost or squandered theirs. He grew rich rapidly, and, on the principle that like attracts like, his money seemed to have the knack of constantly doubling itself, not only in business enterprises but in the more personal affairs of his life. At the age of thirty he married the daughter of a millionaire, and though it was a love-match, it doubled his wealth ; and it was with more than ordinary gladness that he welcomed his first child. But with the coming of this coveted heir came the first great grief that had ever fallen upon the parents—the boy died when only three years old. Within the next five years a sister and then a brother were both laid to rest beside him on that beautiful hill that overlooks the Pacific Ocean in the suburbs of San Francisco. It was then, in the depth of their desolation, that the bereaved father and mother felt how useless, how worse than useless, and almost a cruel mockery, was the wealth they had rejoiced in possessing, only that they might hand it on to those who would follow them.

But after some sad and lonely years—years of such bitter grief and disappointment as teach the heart great lessons—another child came to them and was not called away. They named her Mary, the loveliest of names, but its owner ruthlessly broke it up into that of "Polly," as soon as she could speak ; and, so strong is the force of association, to the two who loved her as the dearest thing on earth, "Polly" soon became the most charming name in the world, since it represented all that was prettiest, most fascinating and endearing, most roguish, playful and delightful to them.



In truth Polly Hamilton was a sweet and lovable girl. Though spoiled from her cradle she was not selfish, except in a superficial way, and not vainer than other girls whose mirrors compliment them even more than their friends. She was simple, warm-hearted and affectionate, loyal to all who loved her, and not bitterly unforgiving to her enemies—if she had any.

As the carriage was whirled onward Mary Hamilton spent the few minutes of the drive homeward in looking at the insensible face resting against her shoulder, and in trying to guess at its owner's history.

"Dolores Mendoza!" she thought. "A Spanish name and a good one. There was a Mendoza down in Yuma County, and he claimed to belong to the old Castilian aristocracy. Papa will know. I wonder if this girl is any kin to that stock. She has a striking face, now that I look at her closely. And what hair, with her olive complexion! What could she mean by trying to get rid of her life? So young—she can't be more than twenty. Poor girl! And she *is* poor, too, for everything about her shows it. How slender and delicate she looks! Ah! I'm afraid she hasn't even had enough to eat," and taking one of the ungloved hands that were lying so helplessly still, in all the unconscious pathos of insensibility, she raised it tenderly, and looked with a searching, critical gaze at the delicate attenuated fingers.

Though brought up in luxury, Mary Hamilton had seen enough of life in the land of quick gains and quicker losses to recognize the signs of poverty that had overtaken those born to better fortune. Her own warm hand closed over the thin, worn fingers; and she thought, gratefully, how easy it would be to change a part of the hard fate which had been laid on this unknown girl.



At that moment the carriage stopped in front of a handsome house in one of the new and fashionable uptown streets, and in the briefest possible time, James, assisted by one of the indoor servants, was carrying the still unconscious girl through the wide hall and up to the room of their young mistress.



## CHAPTER II.

DOLORES.

"No," said Doctor Macdonald, in answer to Miss Hamilton's eager inquiries, "she is not severely hurt. No bones broken, no tendons twisted. A simple bruise and not very serious, fortunately. She didn't faint from pain—at least the pain alone would not have caused the swoon. Compulsory fasting, poor girl! It has been Lent for her, all the year round, I'm afraid, even at the best of times; and for the past forty-eight hours she has had nothing more nourishing than Croton water."

"Oh, Doctor Macdonald! And New York is called a charitable city."

"So it is, Miss Polly; so it is! Don't you run away with any notions to the contrary. That young woman wasn't looking for charity, she's not that kind; and don't make any mistake if you think of being good to her—as you do, of course, for you can't help being good to everybody. To me, as her physician only, she has confided the fact of having had nothing to eat since the day before yesterday. That, together with the pain of



her foot, but, more than all else, the sudden reaction of an over-wrought, highly sensitive nervous system, has been the cause of the swoon which has so alarmed you."

"Then she won't be lame?"

"Not in the least. All she needs is care and nourishment, and within a week or two she will be in her normal condition as to physical health—at least, as nearly so as is possible under the circumstances. But I must tell you that she seems to be suffering from severe mental depression, probably the result of recent grief. On that subject she will be more confidential with one of her own sex than she could ever be with a crusty old bachelor like myself. You and she are about of an age, and I dare wager that before a week is over you will both have exchanged confidences to the last word—if there is such a thing among young women."

"Doctor Macdonald!" exclaimed Mary, in mock indignation. "But there! You know you are a privileged person, and you know, too, that you think young women—all of them—the most charming creatures in the wide world."

"Certainly, my dear," was the laughing reply. "I owe a debt of gratitude to the female portion of the human race. What would my practice be but for the lovely women of this great city? Their wrong-headedness and strong-headedness, their weak-mindedness and meek-mindedness, but, above all, their strong-mindedness! Ah, my dear, I adore the whole lot of them! They multiply my yearly income by ten—"

"I'll hear no more!" interrupted his impatient listener. "You are incorrigible! But I forgive all your calumnies against my sex, since you tell me that this dear girl will suffer no permanent injury from the accident I was the means of causing. And now may I go to stay with her a while?"



"Yes, if you won't talk too much. She is quite weak. If she is inclined to talk to you, let her do so in moderation. It will ease her mind. But let her rest and sleep as much as she will. Good-bye. I will see her again to-morrow."

"Good-bye. You are so good ! I will try to remember all your advice, doctor, and, better still, I will act upon it."

As she turned away to go upstairs, Miss Hamilton found herself thinking more deeply than was customary, with her gay and happy young mind.

"Something about Dolores affects me powerfully," she mused. "She makes me feel as if I wanted to be very good. I wonder what it is. Perhaps it is what they call 'magnetism,' 'atmosphere' and that sort of thing. I don't understand it a bit, but I'm sure it is good, for she not only attracts me but makes me wish to be noble and great."

As she reached the door of the room which had been given to the young stranger, Mary paused in momentary hesitation before entering. There was not the faintest sound from within ; therefore, she noiselessly opened the door without knocking, to find her mother seated near the bed on which the new occupant lay fast asleep.

Mrs. Hamilton was regarding the sleeper with looks of the most lively gratitude as well as admiration, and she turned toward her daughter with a gesture imposing silence. Mary drew forward a low chair and sat down close to her mother.

Dolores, who was now under the influence of a mild sedative as well as wholesome and stimulating nourishment, presented a very different appearance from that she had presented a few hours before. Her face was now faintly flushed with warmth and sleep, and her



magnificent auburn hair, half unbound and lying on the lace-trimmed pillow, formed a fitting background for the delicate features and perfect though sharpened outline of the cheek and chin.

"Isn't she pretty?" whispered Mary.

"Beautiful, rather, I call her," answered Mrs. Hamilton, in the same hushed tone.

"Yes, mamma ; you are right," assented Mary. "Her face is much too fine for mere prettiness. And what lovely hands ! You can see that she's a lady, mamma ; and I do so want a sister—I have *always* longed for a sister, mamma."

"I know it, dear," answered Mrs. Hamilton, stifling a faint pang of jealousy.

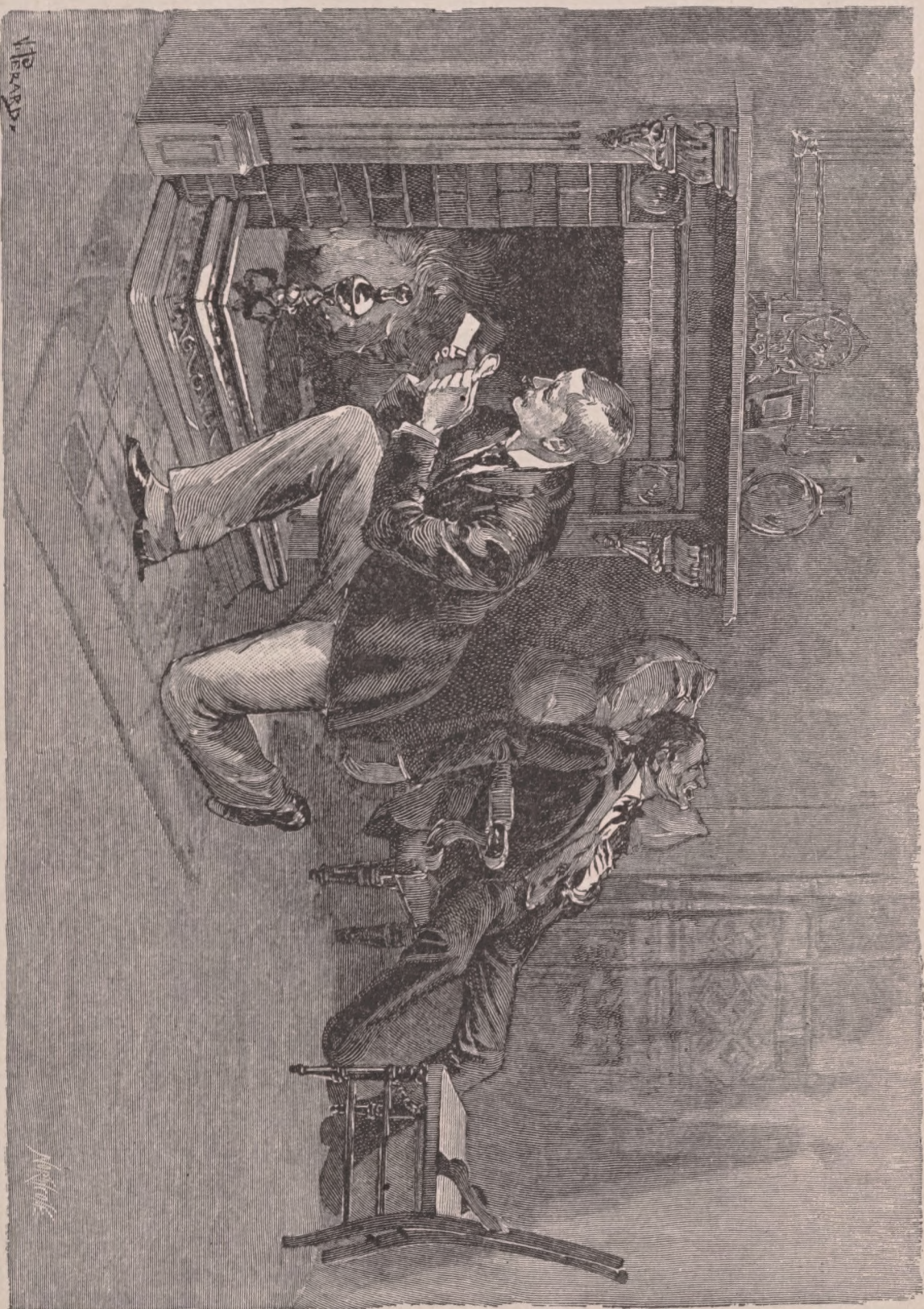
Poor woman ! She had tried so hard to be both mother and sister, with sometimes a momentary bitterness at finding the effort a failure. But, "as perfect love casteth out fear," so, also, it casts out jealousy. She caught the sweet face raised toward her, half wistfully, half entreatingly, between her own soft hands and kissed the rosy mouth with the passionate fervor of unselfish devotion.

"That means 'yes,' " exclaimed Mary. "O you dear mamma !"

"Hush, dearest ! You must first learn what Dolores may have to say about it," Mrs. Hamilton said, with an indulgent smile ; for it was as easy to promise this "sister" to her daughter as it had been in her babyhood to promise a new doll. And though this gift might present other difficulties, there was time enough to inquire about that. So when Dolores at length awakened, after a refreshing sleep, Mary quickly stooped over her, and kissing her with enthusiasm, exclaimed :

"You are never going to leave us, Dolores ! You





WITH THE MAGNIFYING GLASS IN HIS HAND.—See Page 80.







are going to stay with us always ! You are to be my sister !”

A warm flush of joy overspread the young stranger's face, and her eyes became dewy and soft with grateful emotion ; and Mary Hamilton was quick to see that it was not the prospect of ease and luxury that caused that flush, but the far greater joy of having found affection and appreciation in a world that had so long been a cold and barren wilderness.

“ You don't know me,” she said tremulously, but with the happy consciousness that even such a serious drawback was going to be disposed of. “ I may be—you don't know what I may be.”

“ Just so !” said Mary, gayly. “ That only helps to make it all more interesting. Whatever you may be, it is sure to be something fine. Oh, you may trust me ! I'm better than a gypsy for reading faces—women's faces, I mean. I don't understand men a bit. But I forget : I'm not to talk to you. Doctor Mac said I was not ; but, you see, I am an awful chatterbox. Now, just one word more, dear : Tell me : Is there any reason why we two—you and I—may not be lawfully joined together, as they say in the marriage service, as *sisters*, for better, for worse, in sickness and in health, through good or evil report, so long as we both shall live ?”

“ No,” answered Dolores, with a smile that merged into a deep sigh, “ no reason at all, so far as I know, for I am alone in the world, without relative or friend or guardian, quite alone, without a soul to love or even hate me—till I met you this morning.”

“ How delightful !” exclaimed Mary Hamilton. “ I mean, you dear thing, how sad and dreadful for you, but how delightful for me—because I can have you all to myself. And now, just one word more, Dolores,



have you no other name? Something for every-day use, you know. I wouldn't have your name changed for anything, it is so characteristic—a real Spanish name. But it means 'sorrow—sadness ;' it would make me cry if I had to call you Dolores all the time."

"My mother called me Lola," said Dolores softly, and her companion noted the quick catch in her breath, and instantly remembered that the Spanish girl's worn dress and hat had shown all the humble signs of mourning their owner had been able to bestow on them. She guessed rightly that Dolores had but recently lost the mother whom she could not yet name without emotion.

"Lola, and sometimes Lolita," the girl continued, "for these are the pretty diminutives of my name in the Spanish language. But my mother was not Spanish. She came from the Scotch Highlands, and I have often heard her say she loved the canyons and mountains of California for that reason. My father was of Spanish ancestry, and it was to please him that I was called Dolores. It is a family name, and there is a legend that tells how a far-off ancestor of my father accompanied Columbus when he discovered this new world. But he was not an ancestor to be proud of."

"How splendid!" exclaimed the delighted listener. "It is like a story, only so much nicer when one knows the characters or their descendants. But I won't call you Lola or Lolita—I wouldn't let any one call me by the dear little pet names sacred to my own mother. Any one I care for enough may call me Mary or Polly or Molly; but no one may use mamma's pet names; and so it shall be with you, too. I will choose something for my very own; what do you say to Lora or Lorita or Rita? They are all pretty, and I shall call you Lorita. And you shall have a name for me, too; choose one for yourself."



“Why not ‘Maruja?’ You see I am fond of Spanish names, and ‘Maruja’ is our prettiest for ‘Mary.’”

“Agreed!” cried Polly, clapping her hands like a child. “And now we must be good. If Doctor Mac finds you feverish when he comes to-morrow, I shall be greatly blamed; and he will think me incapable of having charge of his patient.”

Dolores smiled happily, and as the sedative administered by Doctor Macdonald still held possession, her eyelids presently drooped and she was soon in a deep sleep.

Within the next ten days these two young girls who had met so strangely had become devoted friends; and the Spanish girl’s history, so far as she knew it herself, had been freely and frankly discussed.

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### CHAPTER III.

#### A FLOWER OF THE HEATHER.

The mother of Dolores had been the only child of an improvident Scotchman of good family, who had ruined his estate, broken his wife’s heart and alienated every relation and friend belonging to him, and finally capped the climax of his follies by leaving his native land to seek a fortune in the gold-fields of California. To aid him in that wild quest, he had taken with him his golden-haired little daughter, Alice—a being so exquisite in her beauty and innocence that even in the wild uproar of the San Francisco of ’50, the motley crowd among whom her father brought her, believed her a



veritable angel dropped down from a weeping heaven to shed a last ray of light into the darkness.

In the midst of scenes too shocking for her to understand, Alice Lyndsay grew to womanhood, as pure as the calla lilies that now grow in those streets, rearing their snowy cups high above the black earth from which they spring. Her father, who was a born bohemian, easy-going, clever, bright, master of half a dozen languages, and possessed of a voice that might have charmed a sitting mavis off its nest, was soon hail-fellow-well-met with the wildest class of San Franciscans, and long before Alice had reached womanhood, he had made and lost half a dozen fortunes. One night, he was shot in a row at a faro table, and at the age of eighteen, Alice found herself an orphan, homeless and penniless. But her father's death was not the worst misfortune that happened to her. She had been seen and loved by a young Spaniard, who had lacked courage to press his suit, but who blessed the opportunity her loneliness and grief now gave him. Alice married Rafael Mendoza, and, though from that hour all worldly prosperity forsook him, his happiness in her love was so great that he never quite realized the misfortunes that pursued him.

At the time of his marriage, Mendoza had been one of the rising men of the San Francisco of that day—a city that might then have been called the Phoenix of the Pacific coast, for it had risen from the ashes of four San Franciscos that had gone before, a richer, fairer, prouder city than any that had preceded it, and destined to be the foundation of the now beautiful city of the Golden Gate. He was also rich in flocks and herds on distant ranches; rich in gold and bonds; rich in fabulous wealth of treasure and of gems said to be buried in some far canyon of which he alone held the secret,



and richest of all in the possession of the one woman he had ever loved. But from the day of his marriage a curse pursued him. His flocks and herds died ; his gold melted away ; his bonds became waste-paper ; and finally his mind failed, and he sank into helpless imbecility. From this last misfortune he only roused occasionally for a few lucid moments, when he would frantically kiss his young wife and child, and murmur, helplessly : “ The curse of the Mendozas—the curse of the wronged and murdered Indian girl ! Why has it come to me ? How have I deserved it ? ”

The beautiful Señora Mendoza soon buried her husband in the lonely canyon of Santiago, where, in his last days he had entreated to be taken, in the forlorn hope of finding the hidden treasure whose secret he had once known. But it was too late : his shattered brain could no longer think, and his hand had lost its cunning. His grave was dug not twenty feet from the buried treasure ; and Alice, with her child, wandered far away, beggars in everything save their love for each other. The Señora Mendoza, who spoke English beautifully, thanks to her bohemian father, obtained the position of governess to a Spanish family who were on the way to the Eastern States ; and after a hundred vicissitudes and a complete breakdown in the health of the still beautiful señora, these two lovely women drifted into New York—harbor for every kind of human wreck. Dolores, whose elegant figure had obtained her the position of saleswoman in a cloak-room, had been able at first to pay their way ; but when her mother's health declined so rapidly that her condition became desperate, she was obliged to resign her position in order to give her the necessary care. From that time the gaunt specter of poverty pursued them, and its terrible eyes met the eye of Dolores wherever she looked ; but she



fought it off day and night till her mother kissed and blessed her for the last time. To buy the right for that dear, dead form to lie in hallowed ground the poor girl had gathered together every shilling she yet owned ; and that being insufficient, she had then sold every article she possessed of furniture and of clothing—and on the day when she first saw Polly Hamilton she had been walking to and fro on the earth, face to face with death by starvation—praying only that it might not be long to wait.

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## CHAPTER IV.

### THE SILVER LINING.

As soon as Dolores was well enough to come downstairs, she declared her immediate intention of returning to her humble apartment, where she had left the few trifles that belonged to her.

Mary instantly volunteered to accompany her.

“ I could not let you out of my sight, dear,” she said, jestingly ; “ you might not return. And what in the world do you suppose the woman of the house thinks of your absence ? ”

“ That I have run away to cheat her out of the few shillings I owe her for rent,” said Dolores, with momentary bitterness. “ The poor, even more than the absent, are always in the wrong—but I am ungrateful to say such things when I have found such dear, generous friends. Truly, the cloud had a silver lining of the brightest hue, though I was long in finding it.”

With quick, impulsive affection she embraced Mary



and Mrs. Hamilton, who was becoming as fond of this new daughter as even her own child could have wished.

"It is like a dream of heaven," continued Dolores, "when I remember the hopeless misery of that day of our first meeting. I didn't know then why I followed you, Maruja ; it seemed an impulse to look for a moment on a face, no older than my own, on which seemed the light of perpetual sunshine, while on mine seemed the constant shadow of darkness. But I have since thought it may have been the whisper of some good angel that drew me after you. Yes, yes, life would now be heaven here, and with you, if—if only my mother could be with me."

The large, soft eyes filled with tears, and though she grieved to see them, Mrs. Hamilton could not wish Dolores to be less conscious of the loss she had so lately known.

"I can never fill her place, dear," she said, "but try to feel that I love you as I would wish to have her love my little Polly."

"Come, Lorita ; here is the carriage." And Mary led the way, with her customary airy, light-hearted manner that covered a depth of feeling she was not willing to display at all times.

"If she supposes that you have run away," continued Miss Hamilton, as the two girls were driving downtown toward the wretched place that had been for more than a year the home of Dolores and her mother, "perhaps your landlady has taken possession of your things to pay the debt you owe her."

Dolores laughed outright, with something more like merriment than Mary had yet heard from her.

"All I own in the world, Maruja, would not bring a dollar if sold to the highest bidder, with the single exception of my mother's picture. I can but hope that



Mrs. Brown has not burned the lot as rubbish : a few letters and a manuscript containing the legend of the Mendoza family and other trifles valuable only as keepsakes ; for if they could have been exchanged for money, they, too, would have gone long ago. The manuscript is a curiosity ; mamma found it among my poor father's papers after his death. It might interest you, dear, because you care for me ; it could not interest any one else, except for antiquarian reasons."

"I hope the woman has not destroyed it !" exclaimed Mary. "What a girl you are ! The heroine of I don't know how many romances, or, if not the actual heroine, something even better—the heir to whole centuries of romance. Some great artist shall paint you as an allegorical figure representing the genius of the New World. It would be suitable for the Columbian Exposition to celebrate the great anniversary."

"What a fanciful idea ! But don't be uneasy about the manuscript. I don't think Mrs. Brown would burn it."

"No," said Mary, "for women attach a sort of superstitious value to anything like documents."

Dolores only smiled in answer, and Mary saw that her face had taken on a strange, rapt expression, while her eyes deepened and glowed as if they saw into some far away, unknown realm, beyond the reach of other eyes. It was a look that Mary had seen once or twice before on the face of her new friend ; and though it had startled her, she understood already that while it continued it was useless to speak to Dolores.

The carriage had proceeded rapidly, and they had now reached a part of the town known only by description to the child of luxury, who, although her hand was at all times open to the cause of charity, dispensed her bounty by means of various kindly messengers. The



squalid children that thronged the streets and lanes, the dirty and reeling men and women collected in groups on the sidewalks and on the street-corners, would now have been alarming but for the presence on the carriage-box of the faithful James, who, with many misgivings and strange questionings in his perplexed mind, drove with exceeding care through this vile neighborhood. At last the carriage stopped in front of a tenement a few degrees less squalid than its general surroundings, and at the same moment Dolores started, or as her companion would have said, "came back to earth again."

"This is the place," she said, preparing to descend from the carriage as James opened the door.

Miss Hamilton rose to accompany her, but Dolores said :

"No, Maruja ; I cannot let you come into this place. Your mother would not wish it." And the words were spoken with emphasis that left no room for argument.

From the first Dolores had possessed a certain command over Mary Hamilton, who, although naturally self-willed and not lacking in strength of character, always submitted to the influence of this strange girl. She was aware of this, and did not resent it ; and she was still thinking about it when Dolores returned to the carriage. The brief visit to her old abode had been painful, and she was pale and trembling, but she had evidently been successful, for she carried in her hand a little box of some old-fashioned Japanese workmanship, in which were contained all her worldly possessions.

"Yes," she said, in answer to Mary's questioning gaze, "I have everything safe. Let me show you the picture of mamma—it is so beautiful ! Papa had it painted soon after their marriage. As you may see, the frame was once set with jewels, but they melted away,



one by one, leaving only the lovely face—to me, the choicest gem of all.”

She pressed the frame of the old-fashioned case, and, as the lid flew back, Mary could not repress a cry of almost startled admiration at the beauty of the exquisite face that was revealed to her. The likeness was a miniature on ivory, painted by the hand of genius. “The lily’s snow and the blood of the rose” had met to form that exquisite complexion; the mouth, soft as velvet and crimson as a cherry, seemed really to unclothe, so lifelike were the smiling lips; the eyes were like dewy violets, and were shaded by dark lashes that curled upward like a baby’s, and eyebrows almost as dark lay in perfect curves upon a forehead white and clear as the silvery brightness of the new moon. The final touch of color lay in the hair, shining like a shower of gold as it fell in unbound, girlish carelessness about the neck and shoulders.

“Oh, what a beauty!” exclaimed Mary, almost breathless with admiration. “I never saw such a lovely face! I see where you get the ruddy, golden lights in your hair, Lorita, but—”

“I am not to be named in the same day with her,” said Dolores, filling out the sentence that Mary left incomplete. “I know it, dear. There was no one—*no one*—so beautiful as my mother.”

And the listener easily understood that love for her mother had been the one sole passion of this girl’s life. She knew already how sad, what a mockery of destiny, had been the end of that beautiful woman; and she longed to change the thoughts that were pressing so painfully on the mind and heart of her lonely child, but she knew not in what words to begin, without seeming hard and unsympathetic. Dolores understood, and responded to the unspoken thought. Pressing her lips to the lovely,



smiling lips of the picture, she closed the frame and returned the miniature to its place.

"Some day we will read the manuscript together, Maruja, though by this time, perhaps, you can guess at the most of it, since I have told you so much of myself and my ancestry. But it will be sweet to talk it all over with you as I used to do with mamma. What thrilling tales and wild romances we have built up on that legend! Many and many a time it has served us for dinner and supper, and often in the magnificent feasts of our heroes and heroines have we fed ourselves and forgotten that we were hungry."

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As the carriage now turned into the avenue, on their rapid drive homeward, Mary suddenly leaned forward and waved her hand, in answer to a bow from a gentleman whom they had passed on their way.

"Did you see him?" she asked, with scarce-repressed excitement, and turned her sparkling face to Dolores.

"I saw a gentleman—yes. He bowed to you, but I did not notice him particularly."

"It was Clarence Stanley—the Hon. Clarence Stanley in his own country, you know. Oh, Maruja, I—I like him, I think. I wish you had noticed him—particularly. But no matter. You will have a better opportunity soon, for he will be sure to call on us to-day. I suppose he has only just come to town, for he has been in Chicago for some time. Lorita, dearest, were you ever in love?"

"Never!" returned Dolores, with the promptness of absolute conviction.

Mary sighed impatiently.

"I supposed you would say that," she said. "And, indeed, how could you, for you never had time; and, oh, my dear little Lorita, it does take such an awful lot



of time ! But I can't help wishing you had been, because—perhaps—you could enlighten me a little. I'm afraid—sometimes I'm awfully afraid that I *am* in love, Rita, and if I am and he is *not*, whatever shall I do, my dear ?”

Dolores smiled, as mothers and elder sisters smile over spoiled children ; the trouble that was agitating Polly Hamilton seemed then so trivial to her.

“ Don't be disturbed about it, Maruja,” she said placidly. “ If you are in love, you will certainly find it out in good time ; and I don't think any properly disposed young gentleman can fail to respond to such a compliment in the right way.”

“ What a comfort you are, dear !” exclaimed Polly. “ Now, I had never thought of that till you suggested it ! Of course, nothing could be simpler.”

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## CHAPTER V.

### THE HON. CLARENCE STANLEY.

It was in her native city that Mary Hamilton first met the Hon. Clarence Stanley ; and, although, as he had told her, he was an Englishman by birth and education, she soon perceived that he was also, as he claimed to be, an old Californian. He had come to the country when a boy, having quarreled with his father on the subject of his vocation. The Earl of Windermere had wished him to study for the church—that time-honored step-mother of younger sons—and on his refusal to do so, words of anger more bitter than had ever before passed between father and son, were spoken



—words which Clarence declared he could neither forget nor forgive. By right of inheritance he had not even a younger son's portion, for his father, who had never liked him, now hated him bitterly ; but on the death of his mother, he had inherited the small fortune which she had possessed in her own right ; and, with the whole amount in his portmanteau, he shook off, as he hoped, forever, the dust of his native land. One consideration only could induce him to return to England—and that was a contingency so remote as to be scarcely worth taking into account. In the event of his brother's death without an heir, he was the immediate successor to the estates and Earldom of Windermere. But, as Lord Appleby was in the prime of life and had been already engaged to marry when Clarence had left England ten years before, the succession was probably long since provided for ; and for himself, he added, with a touch of pardonable pride, he was wholly independent of his father or brother, either ; the small fortune inherited from his mother had already been doubled and trebled so many times that he could buy and sell and buy again the Windermere estates if they should ever come into the market. Not that he had any wish to become their possessor, by any means ; for always in referring to his English home, Stanley spoke of it with repugnance as well as bitterness, declaring his wish never to see it again even if fate should make him its future owner.

This story, simple enough in itself, and, like many others he had heard, became especially interesting to Mr. Hamilton when he saw the acquaintance between his daughter and the young Englishman ripening into an intimacy that had already given rise to a rumored engagement between the two ; and he was particularly glad to find, on investigation, that young Stanley's



account of himself seemed to bear the stamp of truth in every particular. In regard to her future, Mary's father had but one ambition—that she should love the man she married, and that she should marry the right man. Through his many friends and correspondents abroad he had been able not only to substantiate Stanley's own story of his family but to add to it some facts as yet unknown to Clarence, who had held no communication with his father or brother since leaving England. The earl was still living, though advanced in years, but so hale and hearty that he might stand many years between Lord Appleby and the coronet, and as bitterly opposed as ever to his younger son. Lord Appleby was said to be in poor health, but his son, an only child, was a robust and splendid boy; and if the old earl should outlive his own son, there would be a grandson to succeed him.

Mrs. Hamilton gave one little sigh when she first heard all this from her husband. It would have been very nice to see her daughter a countess if, in the course of human events, such a thing should come to pass, but it was a subject she was not going to allow herself to dwell upon; and when she heard of the little boy-heir, she was far too gentle and too much a mother even to think again of future possibilities.

As for Mary Hamilton—she cared for none of these things. She had never yet allowed herself to think very seriously of Stanley. They had drifted into the easy, half-fraternal intimacy of their age. They called each other Polly and Clarence: she thought him “very nice,” and as she had said to Dolores, she “liked” him, and had even wondered sometimes what his state of feeling might be in regard to herself.

The acquaintance had progressed just so far when Mr. Hamilton suddenly announced to his family, that



business would make it necessary for him to spend a year or two in New York ; and when they had been three weeks in their new home, Clarence Stanley one day called on them. He explained that he had business in Chicago, and by an original method of travelling, had chosen to get there by way of New York—just exactly how did not appear ; but he supposed this roundabout route must be due to his English ideas of the country. Mr. Hamilton was disposed to jeer at him as a traveller, but Miss Polly declared she could see nothing to laugh at, particularly as the Chicago business did not seem to be very pressing ; and when, at length, the Honorable Clarence went there, he found that he could attend to his affairs much better by making New York his headquarters.

This last item of information he had just imparted to his admiring listeners, Mrs. Hamilton and her daughter—for Mary had been correct in her surmise that he would call on her before the day was over.

Looking at Clarence Stanley at that moment, it was natural enough that Polly Hamilton, or any other young girl, without experience or the unusual perception that may serve in place of it, should “like” him and more than like him. He had the positive and unmistakable physical beauty that appeals at once to the feminine eye. He was tall and graceful, even elegant, in figure ; he dressed perfectly ; he was blonde, with hazel eyes—wonderful eyes in their changing variety of color and in a strange, steely glitter that sometimes shot into them, for the moment changing the whole expression of the face. His mouth was firm, almost cruel ; and, though it was shaded by a long, silken mustache, he had a trick of passing his fine white hand over it occasionally, as if still further to conceal it. Young women said this was merely to display his handsome hand ; but



perhaps it was a tell-tale mouth, for he could not always command the expression of it. It would have been an interesting face to a student of physiognomy, there were in it such possibilities for good or evil.

To Mary Hamilton it was rapidly becoming the most interesting and attractive face in the world, and she was just becoming aware of it, though she did not guess how fully her feelings were betrayed by her eager eyes and faintly flushed face.

"And this wonderful new sister that you have found, Polly," he said, for Mrs. Hamilton had been telling him all that had chanced in his absence—"am I not to see her?"

"Yes," Mrs. Hamilton answered, rising to leave the room. "I am going to send her to you, Polly, dear; and don't forget that the opera begins at eight. You will accompany us, Clarence? Californians never miss the opera, you know!"

"Certainly—if you will have me." And turning to Mary, when they were alone, he said:

"And what is her name—the new sister?"

"Oh, the loveliest name, like herself, and just suits her—Dolores Mendoza."

"Dolores Mendoza!" exclaimed Stanley, in a tone of uncontrollable amazement. His eyes suddenly glowed and flamed until Mary could have fancied that some strange, bright light leaped from them. That look passed, but a steely glitter remained that caused her an involuntary shudder.

"Yes," she answered, making no effort to conceal her surprise. "Do you know her?"

"Not at all; but the name is an unusual one, and I happen to have heard it before. It is in some manner connected with my family, but I don't know how."



“How very strange! But everything about my darling Lorita is strange. She has such a history! I may tell it to you some time, perhaps. Ah, here she is!” And hastening toward Dolores, who now appeared at the farther end of the long drawing-room, Mary put her arm about the slender figure, looking now so very slight and tall in her clinging, black draperies, and drew her forward till they stood before Clarence, who had advanced to meet them.

While she pronounced the few words that made them known to each other, Stanley bowed deeply, never removing his gaze from the pale, high-bred, sensitive face; but as Dolores acknowledged the introduction with a rather formal expression of pleasure, Mary felt her supple form becoming rigid; a long, gasping sigh burst from her lips, and her head fell backward.

“She has fainted!” exclaimed Mary, in the greatest alarm. “Oh, Clarence, help me! How terrible she looks! Her eyes are wide open, yet she doesn’t breathe!”

“Call some one. Don’t be alarmed! She has been ill, you know. A little water, perhaps, or ammonia. I must own I am not of much use, Polly, for I never before saw a young lady in a faint.”

He was extremely self-possessed, however, to Mary’s great admiration; and when they had placed the insensible girl on a lounge, she hastened away for the assistance and restoratives he had suggested. Stanley waited till she had left the room, and then, feeling that he was safe from observation, he stooped over Dolores and pushed aside the rich, waving hair from her brow. There, on the left temple, was a small heart-shaped mole, in color as red as a ruby and in shape as perfect as if traced by the pencil of an artist.

“I thought so!” exclaimed Clarence Stanley.



He turned to a mirror over the mantel-piece and raised his own blonde hair from his temple, on which Nature had painted the same heart-shaped mole, but its color was black as if cut from ebony.

"We two are the last of the Mendozas," he muttered under his breath; and his cruel mouth quivered strangely, fiercely, "and the sole heirs to that fabulous wealth that lies buried in the Santiago Cañon! But who shall discover the secret of its hiding-place?"

As he turned from the mirror and, bending over Dolores, smoothed the hair about her brow, both Mary and her mother hastily entered, followed by a servant, bearing in the way of restoratives everything her young mistress had been able to find.

Mary flung herself down beside the lounge on which Dolores lay still insensible as when she had left her, rigid, deathly pale and with eyes wide open, fixed and staring.

"Oh, this is horrible!" she cried wildly. "It is not like a swoon, mamma! What does it mean? It was the sight of you," turning suddenly to Stanley—"it was the sight of you that did it! Clarence! Clarence! You have killed her!"

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## CHAPTER VI.

### AT THE OPERA.

At these words, Clarence Stanley turned a startled, inquiring look on the speaker, while Mrs. Hamilton said, with a touch of impatience:

"Mary, you are excited and unreasonable. What can Clarence have to do with this fainting-fit? It is



sudden and inexplicable, but it is not the first time that Dolores has been so affected, even in our brief acquaintance with her ; and it is more than probable that she is subject to fainting-fits."

"Mamma, dear, no. It is not at all probable," returned Mary, decisively. You forget that Doctor Mac said that she was not at all of the fainting kind and that her swoon on the day she saved my life was caused by pain and fasting. Besides, this is not like a fainting-fit, and that is what alarms me. I didn't mean that Clarence was to blame in any way. Of course not. How could he be? But is it not curious that Dolores should have become insensible on meeting his eyes !"

"Did she become insensible on meeting his eyes?" asked Mrs. Hamilton, wonderingly.

"Yes, almost instantly. It was like—like mesmerism or hypnotism, or whatever it is called ; something the like of which I never saw and could not have believed now, had I not actually seen it."

"Don't talk absurdly, dear !" exclaimed Mrs. Hamilton. "Hypnotism and all that sort of thing, which are being so talked of in these days, are a mere fad, and will wear themselves out like all these other 'isms.' Don't you think so, Clarence?"

The young man shrugged his shoulders ; and then, looking with renewed interest at the still insensible Dolores, he answered, with sudden seriousness :

"I hardly know how to reply to your question, dear Mrs. Hamilton. It would seem very unbecoming in an inexperienced fellow like myself, to declare against men of science like Charcot, Richet, Gibier, and a host of others who have thought the subject worth investigating ; but I will venture to say that nine-tenths of the so-called wonders of hypnotism are fraud and nonsense.



Perhaps I ought to add that I have more than once been told by professors of the art or science, whichever it may be, that I possess in an unusual degree the special magnetism that is required for the exercise of this peculiar power."

"Oh, Clarence," exclaimed Mary, in a tone of vague reproach, "then you have unconsciously hypnotized Lorita?"

"You may well say 'unconsciously,' Polly, for no such thought was in my mind; but if you are correct in that surmise, perhaps I may be able to recall her to consciousness."

"Oh, do, please, try, Clarence! See! Already the expression of her face has changed; her eyes are closed now, and she doesn't look nearly so alarming as she did at first. Ought we to send for Doctor Mac, mamma?"

During the talk between her mother and Stanley, Mary had been kneeling beside the sofa on which Dolores had been placed, and she had been trying by every means in her power to restore the insensible girl to consciousness. She now rose at once, while Stanley, having moved forward a step or two, fixed his gaze intently on the insensible face of Dolores, and began slowly to make the upward mesmeric passes as he had often seen them performed by professors of mesmerism.

The rigidity of the young girl's figure had given place to the apparent ease and relaxation of slumber; her eyelids had slowly drooped over the dilated, staring eyes, while her breathing was as tranquil as that of a sleeping child.

Clarence Stanley continued to make the upward mesmeric passes slowly, easily, but with an indescribable air of authority and triumph, which Mary noted at the time and often remembered afterward.



Suddenly the heavy eyelids twitched slightly ; then with dazzling quickness, the eyes opened wide, and Dolores, amazed but conscious, stared inquiringly at the eager, anxious faces that were bending over her.

"What has happened? What is the matter?" she asked almost sharply, and rising quickly as she spoke.

"Nothing, dear, except that you have frightened me horribly," answered Mary, as she seated herself beside Dolores and put her arm about her. "You seemed to faint almost immediately on seeing Mr. Stanley ; and now it appears to have been less a faint than a kind of hypnotic trance, from which he has just recovered you, by making what they call mesmeric passes."

"Is it possible !" exclaimed Dolores, incredulously ; "but I object to being hypnotized. You must *never* take such a liberty again," she said imperatively, turning a look of great indignation upon Clarence.

"Certainly not," he answered, with a deprecating smile, "at least not without your permission, señorita ; but I beg to assure you that on this occasion the effect was as unintentional as it was unexpected."

Dolores put her hand to her head in a dazed manner, and drawing her fingers across her forehead and eyes, she asked :

"Did I speak, Maruja, when I was in this tranced condition? Did I say anything?"

"No, dear, nothing at all. But why?"

"Because I remember a kind of dream—it comes back to me now but indistinctly. It was like a vision—I saw ! Oh, I cannot describe what it was, but the impression is horrible—horrible !"

Her eyes dilated with sudden fear and horror ; and turning toward Clarence Stanley, she fixed on him a keen, almost menacing look, which affected him more than he would have cared to acknowledge even to him-



self. For several seconds her gaze met his, sternly, defiantly. At last she said :

“ Mr. Stanley, you must never again make use of this singular power—if you possess it—to hypnotize me. It may be dangerous ; and even more dangerous to you than to me.”

“ Why so ? ” exclaimed Stanley, unable to restrain a slight start of surprise.

“ Because in this hypnotic state, I may be *clairvoyante*. I have read something of the sort, though I don't understand it. And you may be one of those people of whom clairvoyant revelations might be fatal.”

A gleam of mingled anger and terror shot from the young man's eyes, and his slender, white hand went quickly toward his mouth, which it concealed for some moments as he seemed to caress the long ends of his blonde mustache. Then, with a slightly mocking smile, he answered :

“ I think I have no cause to fear the Señorita Mendoza. If I don't much mistake, we are far away cousins, and our lives will often run in the same channels.”

Dolores looked greatly perplexed as well as astonished, and Mary hastened to explain Stanley's words on first hearing the name of Dolores Mendoza.

“ That would be strange indeed,” she said in reply. “ I thought my father's branch of the family extinct, except for myself. But, even if you are correct, I cannot congratulate you in claiming kinship with the Mendozas. We are a fatal family, except under special conditions, particularly the men of our family. But, pardon me, Mr. Stanley ; I am afraid you will think me very rude. I hope the curious circumstances of our first meeting will serve to excuse me. Maruja, dearest, may I go to my room ? This singular scene has affected me so much that I feel almost ill.”



"You shall do just as you please, Rita, darling, at all times," said Mary Hamilton. "Come, I will go with you, and you will entertain Clarence till I return, mamma."

Not a word or even a look was exchanged between Mary and Dolores till they were alone in the latter's room. Then, indeed, the Spanish girl impulsively clasped her companion in her arms and in a voice of thrilling intensity said :

"Oh, Maruja ! I hope you do not love that man !"

"Love him ? No—yes ! I hardly know !" exclaimed Polly Hamilton, very pale from suppressed excitement. "You remember what I said to you, Rita ; and, oh, I did so long to know your impressions of him ! But now that they seem to be so far from what I had hoped for I think I would rather never hear them."

"They are not pleasant, truly—they are far from pleasant—and yet I cannot remain silent, Maruja, even though that seems to be what you would prefer. I cannot tell you why I have this great and sudden antagonism to Mr. Stanley—it may be caused by the dream or vision while I was unconscious—but I have always had a faculty that some people call intuition, a sort of second-sight—I don't know how best to describe it—but it has never deceived me. Perhaps I inherit it from my Scotch ancestry through my Highland mother, or perhaps the mystic faculty that belonged to the Indian princess of whom I told you has descended through all these generations and lives again in me. Some day soon we will read that manuscript together, and then you will understand better what I am trying to explain, Maruja ; but whatever this faculty may be, whatever it is now telling me of the character and of the unknown past of Clarence Stanley—"

"Lorita !" exclaimed Mary Hamilton, with a sharp



accent of pain in her fresh, young voice, "surely—oh, no, it cannot be that you are going to bring me unhappiness, misery! I will not—I dare not believe any harm of the man I love!"

She turned quickly as she wrenched herself from the half-embrace of Dolores; and, as she rushed from the room, the door closed after her with a harsh and angry sound.

"The man she loves!" repeated Dolores, gazing blankly at that closed door. "Ah, now she knows her true feeling, and I have only precipitated matters. I had better, far better, have said nothing."

Mary Hamilton had fled blindly along the corridor to the solitude of her own room, the door of which she had closed and locked impatiently in the face of her anxious waiting-maid.

"What have I said?" she questioned herself, unconsciously speaking aloud. "That I love Clarence? Well, then, it is true. I have loved him from the first, though I didn't know it; and now I am glad to have the knowledge forced upon me—that is—if he loves me!"

She started from the chair into which she had thrown herself and rushed to a mirror, before which she stood for some moments in unusual anxiety, that presently gave place to pleased and innocent admiration of her own girlish beauty.

"I'm surely pretty enough to win any man?" she said. "Not so beautiful—oh, not nearly so beautiful—as Rita; but, fortunately, she will never be a rival, for she hates poor Clarence, and, apparently, he is not specially pleased with her. How strange! It is a case of mutual antipathy. I have heard Doctor Mac say these mutual dislikes are scientific facts. And I was so anxious they should like each other! Well, well, perhaps it is all for the best; and I must keep them apart as



much as possible ! I hope dear Rita didn't think me cross ; and, as to Norah, I don't think I ever spoke so crossly to the girl since she has been in my service !”

With a light laugh, Polly Hamilton unlocked her door, called to the perplexed and disconsolate waiting-maid, who was pacing up and down the hall, and in a brief time was dressed and looking radiant, as she went into dinner with Clarence Stanley.

That gentleman, whatever his inward perturbation of mind might have been—and the recent scene in the drawing-room had made a powerful impression on him—had never seemed to the Hamilton family more interesting or more engaging. He was immediately conscious of a difference in Mary. There was an indefinable softness in her aspect, a faint, roseate glow on her face ; and when their glances met, her look dwelt on him with a modest air of possession extremely flattering to his vanity. Later in the evening, as they sat beside each other at the opera, it was the same ; and Clarence unconsciously dropped into a manner of lover-like devotion far more pronounced than had ever been seen in his previous acquaintance with Miss Hamilton.

They had been bending forward over the front of the box, for the moment both quite absorbed in the music ; but when the curtain fell they had both drawn back a little, and two pairs of eyes, belonging to two young women in the stalls, who had been earnestly watching them, now looked at each other and smiled.

“Of course, they are engaged?” said Olive Gaye, interrogatively ; but although the words were spoken more as an assertion than a question, a close observer might have detected an undertone of anxiety in the manner of the speaker.

“They certainly seem like an engaged couple to-night,” returned Bertha Sefton ; “but, if they are, I



am sure the engagement is of recent date. You know I am Polly Hamilton's most intimate friend—at least I *was* till within a few weeks—and I am certain that no one was more entirely in her confidence than I used to be. You know I had met her in San Francisco when we were there more than a year ago; we were constantly thrown together. I visited at her house for weeks at a time, and met Mr. Stanley there almost every day; and, although it was currently reported then that Clarence and Polly were engaged, I knew from her own lips that they were not. Since she has come to New York, our intimacy has been renewed, and I feel sure as I can be of anything that Polly would have told me if there had been any change in their relations toward each other. I always thought she was in love with Mr. Stanley, though she didn't seem to understand her own feelings; but it never seemed to me that he was in love with her, although he followed her everywhere and really stood in the way of any other man paying attention to her. He seems to me more like a man who was watching a business speculation than like a young man in love with a pretty girl."

The listener laughed slightly and turned her gaze again toward the box in which were seated Clarence Stanley and Mary Hamilton. The latter were somewhat in the shadow of the curtain, and still further hidden from view by the figure of Mrs. Hamilton, who had come to the front of the box; but to those who were now watching them with the keenness of personal interest it was evident that these two young people were at that moment so completely wrapped up in each other as to be almost unconscious of their surroundings.

"He looks now," said Olive, in a low but distinct tone, "as if he had made up his mind that the speculation was going to be a paying one."



"Yes," answered Bertha, "he looks as if he had determined to marry Polly Hamilton."

At that moment a sharp exclamation caused both speakers to turn suddenly in the direction whence it had come—to meet the sparkling gaze of a pair of beautiful flashing dark eyes. Those eyes were so beautiful and so brilliant that it was several moments before either of the young girls recovered from her surprise sufficiently to understand what had happened. But in the meantime the owner of these eyes had spoken, and with a smile that gave added radiance to her beauty was explaining the cause of a trifling accident and her own sudden exclamation.

"Pardon," she said in perfect English but with a strong though charming foreign accent, "it is only my poor fan." And she held up the wreck of an elegant fan in lace and mother-of-pearl. "I am the only person to blame. In mere forgetfulness I had rested my hand on the back of mademoiselle's chair, and when she leaned against it the poor fan was crushed. I was startled into exclaiming aloud. Pray, pardon me!"

"Oh, dear!" exclaimed Bertha, who saw at once that she had brought destruction on the fan. "I'm afraid it is I who ought to be making apologies—how awkward of me—I am so very sorry."

"No—I beg—don't give yourself a thought about it, mademoiselle; it is really my fault entirely. To be quite frank, I was trying to see the gentleman in the box yonder. I am certain that I recognize an old friend, but I couldn't catch his attention, and that is why I leaned forward and forgot all about my poor fan."

"Mr. Stanley, you mean? Is he a friend of yours?" said Bertha, impulsively.



"Stanley, did you call him? Monsieur Stanley—ah! Then I must have made a mistake," said the fair foreigner in a disappointed tone.

"The Honorable Clarence Stanley," said Bertha, with a sudden curiosity as to what the owner of the fine eyes might say in reply. "A young Englishman who has but recently come to New York,"

"Ah, the Honorable Clarence Stanley, an Englishman, then I *am* mistaken; but I could only see his side-face from here. The gentleman I meant was not an Englishman and quite a different person. Thanks, so much, mademoiselle, for giving me the name."

Bertha murmured some further apology for the breaking of the fan, at which the foreign lady's companion, a stout, elderly man with a very red face and very white hair said impatiently:

"What is all this talk about a broken fan, Celestine? What nonsense! I will buy you a dozen fans!"

The owner of the fan shrugged her graceful shoulders, and murmured in a low tone:

"*Mon mari!*"

Preliminary sounds were heard from the neighborhood of the stage, heralding the return of the orchestra; the curtain rolled up, and the third act of the opera began.





## CHAPTER VII.

### AN AMBITIOUS GIRL.

Bertha Sefton, who went to the opera for the purpose of hearing the music—an uncommon reason—gave her entire attention to the business of listening to it ; but her companion, who was seated farthest away from the rest of their party, felt that the mimic drama going on before her had suddenly lost all interest in comparison to the more personal one which she had now an opportunity of studying. She had but recently returned from England, where she had spent several months ; and while there she had become acquainted with the Earl of Windermere and his family ; and she had been admitted to a degree of intimacy that is only permitted on brief acquaintance to young, pretty and rich American girls.

Olive Gaye was not rich, and, to many persons, she was not even pretty ; but she had that mysterious quality which the French call "*chic*," and which in English can only be described as a combination of tact, style and personal fascination. All this, together with a groundless reputation as an heiress, had opened many very tall doors to her in English society which would have remained closed without these recommendations



to worldly success. Under an appearance of almost childlike ingenuousness, she carried an amount of worldly knowledge that might have done credit to any dowager-leader of fashion and a cold, determined, persistent ambition, of which few people even suspected the existence. This almost baby-like appearance of ingenuousness now enabled her to watch Stanley and Polly Hamilton, to seem at times absorbed in the play and music and to keep an observant eye upon the owner of the broken fan, the foreigner, whose elderly husband had addressed her as Celestine ; and all this Olive Gaye managed to do without attracting any more attention to herself than a well-behaved child might have done. It was not the least of this young lady's charms that there was something attractive even about her way of being rude. She quickly perceived that Polly Hamilton was also giving her undivided attention to the music, having come for the same reason as Bertha ; and Stanley, now that he was no longer devoting himself in word and look to his companion, ceased to appear to this shrewd observer so much like an engaged lover.

"No, he doesn't love her," she thought ; "but he chooses to have her believe that he does. If he has made up his mind to marry her, of course, that amounts to the same thing. Does he love any one, I wonder ? Or is he capable of love ? I fear not, and those men are always the hardest to manage. Now, I have made up my mind to marry him, if circumstances make it worth while ; and if the little boy should die, it would be very well worth while, for Lord Appleby is a doomed man. He can't live six months, and though the child seems bright and healthy, he inherits the malady that is killing the father. A sudden shock, a severe cold, a fall from his pony may kill him any day.



It is more than an even chance that the wife of the Honorable Clarence Stanley may one day be Countess of Windermere—a pretty title, and I like it, too ; it will suit me.”

A ripple of merriment flashed over the pale, clear face, lighting up the soft, tranquil eyes and giving the delicate cheeks and chin gentler and rounder curves.

“ ‘Countess of Windermere !’ I have often written it on my card,” she said to herself, continuing her mental soliloquy ; “and perhaps it might have been wise if I had gone further and had it engraved there. The dear old earl ! Wasn’t he in love with me ? There is no fool like an old fool ; and, after all, he may outlive both sons and grandson ; but if he does, my power remains. Men of his age and temperament, when they fall in love at all, don’t get over it easily, nor are they in a hurry to repeat the experiment. Clarence looks well ; he is wonderfully handsome ; but not at all like the old earl nor like Lord Appleby either. Does he inherit the fatal malady that is killing his brother ? They must have it on the mother’s side, for their father is as hale and strong as his youngest son. But if that is not your particular weakness, my handsome Clarence, I must find out just what it is, for you will never be as much in love with me as your papa is.”

As this thought passed through her mind, Olive Gaye moved slightly and turned her head, so that, without seeming to stare at her, she could look calmly and deliberately at her near neighbor, Madame Celestine. That the young foreigner was a woman of surpassing loveliness she had quickly seen in the merely passing glimpse already bestowed on her ; and now, looking at her critically and leisurely, she found that the first impression was only deepened by more extended observation.



"What a beauty!" she thought, without a twinge of envy; for this singular girl had almost a contempt for mere physical beauty. "It is a compensation to have no beauty rather than be put in competition with such perfection as that. I suppose she has no brains at all. For nature is just, and when she turns them out like that, she generally puts all their goods in the show-window. But wait a minute, Olive, my dear. Perhaps there is more in this show-window than appears at the first glance. If she was mistaken in her supposed recognition of my handsome Clarence, *why does she look at him in that way?*"

Olive Gaye had more than once seen the expression which passionate love could give to the human face, and she had never before seen that expression more intense than it now showed in the beautiful features and glowing dark eyes of Madame Celestine.

"She loves him!" thought Olive. "That is not a mere memory called up by a resemblance, real or imaginary—it is the man she is now looking at that she loves. There is some mystery here, and if I can solve it, perhaps it may be of use to me. If he had any sensibility, such a look would magnetize him, but he hasn't; another sign that he will not be an easy man to deal with; but, no matter. Nothing that is worth having is easy to get. But I do wish he would look this way for an instant; I would give much to see his face if he should suddenly meet that woman's eyes. But, no! Bertha's head is in the way; even if he should look he wouldn't see her; there, the act is over!"

And as the curtain fell, Clarence Stanley again bent toward Polly Hamilton, and the two were presently once more absorbed in themselves. As they drew back into the box, Olive heard a long-drawn sigh from the lips of Madame Celestine. It was a most eloquent sigh,



and told of hopeless love, and passionate, despairing jealousy more plainly than a whole torrent of words could have done.

"Who can she be?" thought Olive Gaye. "They are not in society here, and yet they are evidently wealthy. And with her beauty. But no doubt they are strangers here—new arrivals in the city. Bertha, dear," and she turned toward her companion, who had just ceased from rapturous applause of the *prima-donna*, "I want to know your friend, Polly Hamilton; she seems a charming girl. When will you take me there?"

"Whenever you please; any day you say—to-morrow if you like."

"Very well, then—to-morrow," said Olive, with a pretty air of decision, which, curiously enough, left on Bertha's mind the impression that *she* had decided the matter—one of the many ways in which Olive Gaye managed to have her own way, while other people imagined that they gave it to her.

The usual hubbub of talk and movement, almost as loud as that of children let loose from school, succeeded the fall of the curtain; and in a momentary pause, Olive Gaye, who was all eyes and ears, heard the foreign lady's husband speaking, in a wearied tone:

"Have you not had enough of this, Celestine. I am deadly tired of it," he said.

From Celestine there was a low murmur of reply in French, and Olive could only guess at the substance of it, for she heard only two or three words. Evidently madame was not so tired, however, and had determined to stay to the end of the opera; for the elderly gentleman shrugged his shoulders impatiently, and then settled himself to another thirty minutes of endurance.

"She wants to watch him!" thought Miss Gaye, keeping an attentive gaze on Madame Celestine. "Yes,



there is certainly a mystery here, and I must get the clue to it. Bertha, dear," she said aloud, but without removing her watchful gaze from the beautiful face of the unknown Frenchwoman, "what did you mean, a little while ago, when you said that you *had* been the most intimate friend of Polly Hamilton? You haven't quarreled, have you?"

"Quarreled! Oh, my, no! I never quarrel," said Bertha, placidly. "But Polly has a new friend now, and I sometimes felt a little bit hurt to feel myself almost set aside, though I have really no cause for complaint. At the best, our intimacy was only an accidental one; there was no deep friendship about it. And Polly is just as sweet as ever she can be; but she loves this new girl. She's downright silly about her."

"You good little thing! I should be awfully jealous!" exclaimed Olive. "But who is this new girl? Don't you hate her?"

"Not in the least. I'm never jealous, and she is a lovely girl. Her name is Dolores Mendoza."

At the sound of this name, Madame Celestine gave an almost convulsive start. It was so sudden that she could not immediately control the effect produced on her feelings, and her gaze, which had been concentrated on the occupants of the box, was turned with startling suddenness on Bertha. Her face, which was very pale, immediately became suffused with color on meeting Olive's gaze, for she felt instinctively that she was being watched. She leaned back in her chair and made a ridiculous feint of using her broken fan with the air of a petulant child. Olive Gaye continued her talk with her companion.

"How very singular! Quite like the things that happen in story-books, Bertha, because that is a name associated with the Windermere family! I don't



exactly know how, except that the heir-at-law, if the Honorable Clarence and his brother and nephew should die, happens to be a Mendoza—owing to the marriage of another branch of the Stanleys with a Spanish family of that name. They are so mixed up, those old-country aristocratic families, one has to study the ‘Peerage’ several hours a day in order to know all about them.”

Olive knew now that her neighbor was watching and listening even more intently than she had herself been doing; and it was a disappointment to both when the curtain again rolled up and the last act of the opera began.

“‘The plot thickens,’” she said to herself with the slow, childlike smiles that had captivated the old Earl of Windermere, though it had not deceived him, “and the mystery is becoming decidedly interesting. The name of Mendoza has some very unusual association for the lady of the broken fan; the Honorable Clarence has peculiar associations with that name, too, and she has known and loved him—and, apparently, loves him still—but, evidently, under a different name. But, to her, a rose by any other name is just the same. Now, what does all this mean, I wonder? Well, it will give me something to do to unravel this pretty tangle, and I enjoy it more than a play. Life is very dramatic and so unexpected!”

The opera was now coming to an end, and as Madame Celestine and her husband rose hastily and were soon lost in the crowd the moment the curtain fell, Miss Olive Gaye had no further opportunity then for observation of the life-drama which, in its first stages, she had found so interesting. But she didn't dismiss it from her mind; on the contrary, it occupied her every thought, and her first act, when she reached



home, was to write the following letter to a friend in England :

“ DEAREST TODDLEKINS :

“ What was that story you once began to tell me, and never had an opportunity to finish, about the Stanley family—do you remember, dear?—and the quarrel of the Hon. Clarence with his papa ? And how are poor, dear Lord Appleby and his most interesting little boy ? If my memory doesn't make me mistake, you began to tell me about the cause of Clarence Stanley's finally quarreling with his father in such a serious manner that they parted forever—and the earl is such a perfect gentleman ! It is hard for me to imagine any one having such a serious quarrel with him. You spoke, too, of the Mendoza branch of the family, and of a young lady to whom Clarence was engaged, and with whom he had seemed deeply in love. I am interested in this, because there is a young lady here whose name is Mendoza—not a common name, you know ; and it has occurred to me that she may be in some way related to the Stanley Mendozas. That photograph of the Hon. Clarence that you once showed me was very handsome—I never dared speak of him to the earl, it was such a sore subject ; otherwise I would have asked for a picture of him. I have pictures of Lord Appleby and his wife and also of the little boy—the dear little fellow ! Now, Toddie, dear, *couldn't* you send me a photo of Clarence ? If that is impossible, have a copy made from your own, and let me bear the expense. Won't you do this for your own, dear, naughty, willful

“ NOLLIKENS ?”

Having carefully sealed and stamped this letter, Olive Gaye rang for a servant. The servants and others of the Gaye family had long since ceased to be



imposed on by the childlike ingenuousness and sweetness of this young person. She therefore wasted no infantine smiles on the messenger into whose hands she gave her letter.

"Stephen, see that this letter gets into the mail that leaves for Queenstown to-morrow morning. Let there be no mistake. The *Servia* sails at eight o'clock."

"Yes, miss," answered Stephen.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE SECRET OF THE MINIATURE.

When Polly Hamilton reached her home after the opera on the night that was to be memorable in her life she felt that she was a very happy girl. No words of love, nothing that could have been called a declaration on the one hand or an acceptance on the other, had passed between her and Clarence Stanley, but she knew that she loved him, and she felt that she need never again doubt his love for her. The only thought that troubled her was that "Rita! Dear, darling Rita!" would not be equally happy in this knowledge.

"And, oh, I *do* hope that I didn't seem cross and heartless towards her. I must see her for a minute before I can sleep to-night, and she must know that I love her now and always the same as ever," she thought, as she hurried toward her own room, pausing a moment at the door leading into that of Dolores.

"Come in," said an eager voice, when she tapped on the door; and entering, she was met by Dolores, who came toward her with outstretched arms.



"Thanks, Maruja, for coming in to say 'Good-night.' I couldn't have slept if you hadn't. I have been so vexed to think I might have wounded you."

"You couldn't have wounded me on purpose, Rita. And do you think I would ever have allowed myself to feel hurt so long as I knew that? Besides, it is all a mistake—a mere, unreasonable fancy on your part, dear. Clarence is all that is fine and noble; and when you know him better, I am sure you will think so, too."

"I'm sure I hope so, Maruja; and I have been taking myself to task all the evening for allowing myself to seem harsh and unjust toward any one whom you care for. Since you love him, he must be good and worthy. You could not throw your heart's best love away on a bad man."

"Oh, as to that, Rita, I have no judgment about men; always remember that, my dear; but this isn't a matter of judgment. I love Clarence and he loves me; and, as you say, that is proof enough that he is worthy. And he is so interested in you, Rita; we talked about you all the evening. His mother's father was directly descended from a branch of the Mendoza family, and his name was Raphael Felix Mendoza Stanhope. I don't know how Clarence remembers all his relations, there are so many of them. And now, if it turns out that you are a far-off cousin, he will have one more to remember. Oh, Rita, dear, do let us set a day for reading that wonderful manuscript of yours; and left Clarence be present on that occasion, will you?"

Dolores shrank instinctively from this proposition, and she answered coldly:

"I hardly think I can do that. The story is a singular one, and the ancestor whose exploits it celebrates was by no means a person to be proud of. I don't mind talking over my family affairs with you, Maruja;



but with a stranger! You must see how different that would be."

"But if he isn't a stranger—at least, in that sense? If Clarence really, on his mother's side, belongs to the Mendoza family? And I feel sure it is the same branch of the family, for there are legends of Indian ancestors among these English Mendozas, too, and I am getting wildly excited about this story. Now, when will you let us have the reading of it, Lorita?"

"Soon," said Dolores, with a playful air of mystery, "but not quite yet."

"And you will let Clarence be present, to please me?"

"I would do a great deal to please you, Maruja," answered Dolores, with the indulgent manner of an elder sister—a manner that had already become very dear to Polly Hamilton—"and I suppose I shall do this."

"Oh, you sweet thing!" exclaimed the happy girl, with the effusiveness of her sex and age. "And now good-night. Not for the world would I be the cause of dark rings about those lovely eyes of yours to-morrow—good-night and happy dreams to you, my Rita!"

Dolores sighed deeply as the door closed after Polly, and she murmured sadly:

"And yet something tells me she will never—never be happy with that man, even if he loves her, and I don't think that he does. I wish from my heart that she had never seen his false and cruel face!"

It was now after midnight, and a brilliant sky, starred with myriad points of diamond light, was visible through the window from which the shade had been accidentally pushed aside. Dolores, with a quick impulse to breathe in the beauty of the midnight hour, turned out the artificial glare of the gas, drew up the window-shade, and



stood gazing out at the sky. The silvery radiance of the stars mingled with the moonlike light of the electric lamps, and touched with beauty all the commonplace and often repulsive objects that spoil the view by daylight ; but though she was vaguely conscious of this, Dolores was looking straight into the stars overhead, and the calmness and restful joy which that spectacle had always brought to her now stole gently into her troubled mind. The soul seemed to float away through the depths of space ; visions of celestial repose and loveliness stretched out before her inward sight ; the rhythm and harmony of the spheres, circling forever in their millions of orbits, seemed like unknown but heavenly music wafted to some secret sense of hearing deep within her inmost being. And then, as it had been always from her earliest childhood, she was suddenly conscious of a Presence—nothing tangible and nothing in the least degree terrifying. It was an atmosphere of something exquisitely pure and spiritual, the tremulous, pulsating breath of a guardian angel. A feeling of great content and happiness took possession of her ; and gently drawing down the shade, she turned away from the window and began her preparations for bed, and her one thought was :

“Everything will be well and as it should be if we will but wait and be patient. Ah, if I could only remember that, but I am so prone to doubt and to fear and to anticipate the worst. Perhaps the many disappointments and sorrows of life have made me so ; but I must strive against that tendency ; the bright beings of a higher life can only come close to us when we are at our best. Let me try always to remember that—”

As she placed her head on the downy pillow, Dolores was already almost in a dream, out of which a radiant face seemed to smile upon her, and across her brow and



cheek she felt a touch as soft and sweet as the dropping of rose-leaves.

“Mamma, dearest,” she murmured, “is it you? Ah, yes, my own mamma, it must be you, for nothing can keep our mother from us. Nothing—not even death!”

And then Dolores slept, tranquilly, happily; and such sleep might well have drawn the angels to look on it and bless it.

Determined that nothing merely fanciful should cause her to bring sorrow to the girl who had rescued her from loneliness and poverty, Dolores set herself the task of looking for every good quality in the character of Clarence Stanley, with the necessary accompaniment to such a search, of being as blind as possible to his defects; and, looked at from this point of view, she was surprised to find how pleasing a person that gentleman all at once became. As to whether this was a right or wise thing to do, she did not yet pause to ask herself. She was so fond of Polly, and grateful affection went so far beyond anything else, that her impulse was to think nothing and feel nothing except what were calculated to make Polly happy.

And Polly was happy. Her pretty face beamed with joy when she saw how entirely her new sister seemed to have changed her views in regard to Clarence.

Mr. Stanley, according to his almost invariable custom, called to see Polly about the middle of the afternoon on the day succeeding their evening at the opera, and he was agreeably surprised to find himself very cordially received by Dolores. The possibility of their relationship to each other formed a subject of engrossing interest to Polly; and it was, also, very interesting to themselves, although, at first, such a supposition was far from attractive to the young Spanish girl. But the thought grew upon her; and as she saw Mary Hamil-



ton's pleasure in the idea, and as she reflected that, if related to this handsome young Englishman, she was also related to his whole family, a sudden desire awoke in her heart that the surmise might prove a correct one.

It was very sad to stand all alone in a great wide world where all others—the poorest, the most wretched—had brothers and sisters or other relatives. She had never felt it while her mother still lived, for in the passionate devotion that embraced all kindred in that one relationship, Dolores had never felt the want of any other love. But all was different now ; even her affection for Mary would be increased, if possible, by knowing that she would become the wife of a man who was in reality the relative and cousin he declared himself to be.

And what a handsome fellow he was, this Clarence Stanley, and bright and charming, too ; and, yes, no doubt lovable and noble, for the man who smiled in that way into the sweet uplifted face of Polly Hamilton must be worthy of regard and admiration.

“Without doubt you two are of the same race,” said Polly, triumphantly. “I can now trace a personal resemblance between you—in fact, I have been aware of it from the first, though I didn't know just what it was. But, Rita, dear, your face was like a face that I had seen before—like one with which I was familiar, from the moment I first saw you. All faces we really love are like that, I think ; and I explained it that way to myself. But now I know there was even more in it than that ; it was the resemblance to Clarence.”

Dolores listened to these words with an indescribable feeling made up of many different emotions ; there was a sudden overwhelming return of her first antagonism toward Stanley ; and as she glanced at him there



was a startled terror in the conviction that they did look alike ; though it would have been difficult to say just where the resemblance was ; and yet there was that 'family likeness,' as it is called, so quickly recognized and yet so difficult to describe ; but stronger than all else, she was conscious of Polly Hamilton's love for this man, of whom, a day or two before, she had said that she was afraid she "liked him."

"Liked him," thought Dolores, with a shiver of apprehension, as she watched her friend's beaming face, her flushed cheek, her eloquent, glowing eyes, and the glances she bestowed on the object of her regard, "that 'liking' has now passed into something little short of adoration !"

Ignorant as she was of the passion of love, and all unlearned as to girlish fancies, Dolores knew quite well that Polly Hamilton's heart was thoroughly awakened, and that she had, at one plunge, precipitated herself into the depths of this wildest sea of emotion.

That thought recalled her to her former intention to see only what was pleasant in Clarence Stanley, and again she repressed the feeling of repulsion against him that had almost overcome her.

"Yes," she said, glancing at him, "we are alike, somewhat, and as I remember my poor father, though I was very young when he died, Mr. Stanley looks even like him. I am more like mamma, Maruja, though she was so lovely that it seems vanity in me to say so—"

"Lovely ! Yes, indeed ! Oh, Clarence, you never saw such a beautiful face ! Rita, will you let us look at the picture ? Dear, where is it ? Can I get it ?"

Dolores drew the miniature from her pocket and, opening the case, handed it to Polly, who in turn gave it to Stanley ; at least she held out the case to him and, as he took hold of it, their hands were pressed against each



other, and they stood gazing on the fair face of her who had been Alice Lindsay, and who now lay in a nameless grave among strangers, forgotten by all the world save one slight girl to whom that thought was now so bitterly present that she turned away from the sight of these lovers who were looking at her mother's picture.

As Dolores walked to the other side of the room, a servant announced the arrival of callers, and Polly, with a bright blush, started away from Stanley, leaving the miniature in his hand.

"Oh, Bertha," exclaimed Polly, "I am delighted to see you! How you have neglected me! Miss Gaye, I am so glad! How sweet of you to bring your friend to see me, Bertha! She has spoken of you so often, Miss Gaye, I don't feel at all that you are a stranger. Pray allow me: Miss Gaye, Mr. Stanley; Miss Sefton, Mr. Stanley."

"I am particularly glad to meet Mr. Stanley," said Olive Gaye, extending her hand, "because I had the pleasure of meeting his family when I was abroad."

"Indeed?" exclaimed Clarence, as he touched the extended hand.

And perhaps he was the first young man in all her experience of them who felt it necessary, on first meeting her, to be on his guard against the ingenuous Olive Gaye.

"Yes, indeed, what a charming man your papa is, Mr. Stanley! Dear old gentleman! Till I met the Earl of Windermere, I really felt a little timid about meeting noblemen. In my innocent ignorance I couldn't quite recognize that they were like other people; but your papa quite cured me of that feeling, Mr. Stanley. And then your brother, Lord Appleby! He is a most delightful person."

"Ah! We are a delightful family altogether, Miss



Gaye," said the Hon. Clarence Stanley, good-humoredly.

"Yes, Mr. Stanley, you are a delightful family; and Lady Appleby and the dear little boy, the new heir to Windermere, and even dear old Toddlekins!"

"Ah, indeed! There you have the advantage of me, Miss Gaye. You see it is many years since I left England, and my brother was not yet married. I hope the dear little boy is quite well. I know nothing that would distress me more than any accident to him. But, 'dear old Toddlekins!' Now, who is Toddlekins? That is a member of the Stanley family with whom I am not at all acquainted."

"Why, of course; because I bestowed that name upon her myself. Toddlekins is the old-maid sister of Lady Appleby."

"Really, I had quite forgotten her! And by that name, too! But, since you have bestowed it on her, I am quite charmed to make her acquaintance."

"But she has not forgotten you, Mr. Stanley. Ah, no! You are quite a hero to her, and she has a picture of you about which she is quite silly. She has it set up in her room like a saint in a shrine."

"A picture of me!" exclaimed Clarence Stanley, and his hand closed convulsively upon the miniature he had been holding. He was conscious of the violence of his own grasp, and he felt the old and worn hinge of the frame snap. How provoking! Dolores would be distressed at the accident, and he was very anxious to do nothing that might annoy her.

Mary Hamilton, vaguely conscious that something like a duel of words was taking place between Clarence and this new acquaintance but quite unable to guess at the meaning of it, had taken Bertha Sefton to the other side of the room to meet Dolores, and the three girls



stood there, exchanging commonplaces and feeling uncomfortable. Bertha was wishing that she had not brought Olive, and wondering at her curious manner toward Mr. Stanley; Polly was thinking that Olive Gaye was "queer," and Dolores was waiting an opportunity to get back her mother's miniature without being obliged to ask for it, and feeling that she could not endure to have it looked at and spoken about by these strangers, even though they were Maruja's friends. Olive Gaye alone was perfectly serene.

"A picture of you!" she was saying, repeating Stanley's last words. "Why, yes, that is not very surprising, I am sure. Why shouldn't dear old Toddlekins have a picture of you if she wants one; and a most excellent picture it is, Mr. Stanley. Now, I don't think you at all like your papa, or like Lord Appleby; but I recognized you at once by that picture when I saw you last night. Oh! How did you like the opera? Wasn't it lovely? I just dote on music! Do you?"

Clarence declared that he, too, doted on music; and then he said how flattered he felt that Miss Gaye had recognized him from his resemblance to his picture. Mary Hamilton now came toward them to introduce Dolores to Miss Gaye; and Stanley felt that he was at that moment almost in love with Polly—pretty, innocent, good, honest, little Polly.

He took immediate advantage of this slight diversion to retire to a little distance in order to examine how much mischief had been done to the miniature. He found that the case was not broken; the slight snap he had heard was caused by pressure on what was evidently a secret spring in the back of the case; and, as this had yielded, a piece of parchment, yellow with age, had dropped out of it and now lay in the palm of his hand.

Clarence cast one quick, startled glance toward Dol-



ores, and saw that she was standing with her back towards him, talking with Olive Gaye. His heart gave a great bound of triumph.

What was it? He could scarcely repress his excitement, so great was his longing to get away where he could examine this slip of parchment at his leisure. And yet, perhaps, it might prove of no value at all. At any rate, it would be well to return the miniature at once, and so rouse no suspicion in Dolores, who probably knew nothing of the secret contained in it. He watched his opportunity, and presently succeeded in placing the miniature in her hand in such a manner as to attract no attention to it. She gave him a swift, grateful look—a look that flashed like light from her deep, dark eyes and which sent a strange electrical quiver through the heart of Clarence Stanley. But he was scarcely conscious of it then, though he remembered it afterward. His mind was on fire for a single glance at the slip of parchment he held in his hand. He felt he could not restrain his curiosity any longer, and, under cover of examining a book which he had taken up from a table, he went over to a window. There he opened the parchment, and laying it within the open book, he read the first line written across it—read it slowly, for it was in the Spanish language—translating it carefully, word by word :

*“ Below is given, in cipher, the secret of the hidden treasure of the Mendozas, buried in the Santiago Cañon.”*





## CHAPTER IX.

“KNOWLEDGE IS POWER.”

As the full significance of the first words sank into the mind of Clarence Stanley, he became dizzy with the possibilities of future wealth that rushed into his excited thoughts, for he knew that he possessed in that slip of parchment the key to almost fabulous treasure. True, the secret was concealed in a cipher that was of the most intricate character, but he was not the man to be baffled by anything of that sort. He knew that all ciphers were made on certain rules ; and, besides, having a natural talent for puzzles of every description, he had often amused himself by the working out of various ciphers and cryptographs ; and by then re-arranging and transposing them into more difficult forms than before, this was mere play. In all arithmetical or algebraic problems there are certain family resemblances easily recognizable to a mathematical mind ; it is the same in cryptography, or any other species of mental gymnastics ; and Stanley felt himself easily master of the situation. But the excitement of having this secret in his possession affected him so powerfully that he was obliged to exercise the greatest control over himself in order not to betray his feelings. He was, however, a person of resources, and startling situations











were not new experiences to him. He folded the parchment, took an old-fashioned wallet from his pocket—a wallet bearing his name and the coat of arms of the Stanley family ; and having opened it, he placed the precious document in the inmost pocket. Then with great deliberation he returned the wallet to its former place, and closing the book he carelessly returned it whence he had taken it.

No one had observed him—that he perceived at a glance. Mary Hamilton, who had always been, as her companions had said, “ a very girly girl,” was, for the moment, entirely occupied by her two callers and by Dolores. But when Bertha suddenly declared that she and Olive had made a very long call and must now bring it to an end, Clarence Stanley found himself included in the hubbub of good-bye and farewell remarks that presently ensued. He took advantage of this to bring his own visit to an end ; and notwithstanding an imploring look from Polly, he took his departure, promising to see her on the next day.

He went directly to his hotel, and as soon as he had reached his room he locked his door, sat down at a writing-table and placed the parchment with its cryptograph before him. As he sat there, poring over its secret characters, he scarcely looked like the same man on whom Polly Hamilton had fixed all her hopes of future happiness. The whole expression of his face was changed. The bright and debonair look that characterized him in society was gone, and all his latent capabilities for evil came to the surface. But the predominant expression was an eager, greedy, hungry love for gold ; and as he studied the mysterious characters on the parchment, there was but one thought in his mind—that he would master its secret and become the sole possessor of the wealth of the Mendozas.



That he would find the cipher a difficult one to interpret he had, of course, expected ; but he soon learned that it was more than difficult ; it might even prove impossible. Never had he seen such characters. How should he begin to interpret them ? Was each character a letter, and, if so, to what mysterious language did they belong ? Or was each character a symbol, and, if so, what did the symbol indicate ? Hour after hour he spent over the parchment, turning it hither and thither in every direction and looking at it from every point of view. There were twelve characters ; that was the first discovery. Why twelve ? There were twelve signs of the zodiac, twelve months in the year, twelve tribes in Israel, twelve apostles. What was the mystic signification of twelve ? Had it any ? He began copying the characters, tracing them one by one, with laborious minuteness. They were certainly not letters ; they were—yes, surely, they were fragments of a picture ! He took several pieces of paper and traced each one of the characters, separately, on a piece of the paper, and then laid them side by side, to catch the effect ; but this told him nothing.

“If I had a pair of scissors !” he thought, gazing helplessly about the room. “Ah ! How welcome would be the sight of a woman’s work-basket at this moment ! Is there nothing I can manage with ?”

He rose from the table and began walking aimlessly about, till, catching sight of his dressing-case in the inner room, he went toward it with an ejaculation of triumph.

“My nail-scissors ! What was I thinking of, not to remember them ?” And snatching up that implement of his toilet, Mr. Stanley again sat down to the solution of his cryptograph. With great care, he cut out from the pieces of paper each carefully traced character, and then he endeavored to fit them together. Again and



again he tried and failed. The mysterious scraps of what seemed to be a picture of something had no meaning by themselves, still less had they any when he laid them side by side, above, below—nothing. With a groan, he leaned back in his chair and looked up at the ceiling. Then he gathered up the scraps of paper in his hands, and looked vindictively toward the grate, in which, as the afternoon had been chilly, still burned a bright fire. He was on the point of crushing the papers in his hand to throw them into the grate, when a sharp knock sounded on his door. Clarence Stanley started slightly, and opening the drawer of his table, swept into it the fragments of paper he had so carefully cut out, and on top of that the piece of parchment with its well kept secret. Quickly locking the drawer, he turned impatiently to the door, on which now sounded a second and louder knock.

"Come in !" he cried : and as the handle was turned, ineffectually, he hastened toward the door, unlocked it and flung it open.

"I had forgotten the door was locked," he said, with a sort of insolent impatience toward everything outside of it, and then, in a sharp tone to the servant who stood waiting, "well, what do you want?"

"Some one—a—a gentleman to see you, sir," answered the man in a hesitating way, as he tendered a card, which Stanley took ; and, without looking at it, he said :

"Oh, all right ; show him up."

As he glanced out after the servant, Stanley observed that the hall lights were already burning, and he realized that he must have been engaged for hours in the effort to read the mysterious cipher, without even suspecting the approaching dusk. He poked his fire viciously, so that it sent out a myriad of bright sparks ;



and then having lighted several gas-burners, he glanced at the card he still held in his hand, and exclaimed :

“ Why—who—the deuce !”

The name on the card was :

.....  
: PROF. HENRI VAN TASSEL. :  
: .....

And before Stanley had recovered from his amazement, the owner of the name stood, bowing, in the doorway.

“ Oh, come in !” exclaimed Stanley, testily. “ If I had read your name first, I don’t think I should have had you come up, but since you are here, perhaps you can be useful. Shut the door, and lock it, too ; I don’t want to be disturbed.”

The person to whom these curt words had been addressed obeyed the concluding direction with the air of a slave who acknowledges a master ; and, coming forward, he dropped into a chair to which Stanley pointed with insolent indifference.

Professor Van Tassel was a small, dark, slender man of an uncertain age that, according to circumstances and the hour of the day, might have been variously guessed at anywhere from thirty to fifty years. Just now he looked about forty ; pale, with sunken cheeks, longish, straight hair, gaunt and hungry, with large, wild eyes and an inexpressible appearance of loss. No one that ever looked at him and was capable of putting into thought the effect produced by his appearance could have failed to be conscious of this curious sense of loss which he carried about with him like an atmosphere ; to some it was pitiful, to others ridiculous, and to others still, and by far the greater number, it was perfectly inexplicable. To Stanley, who understood it



perhaps even better than the victim himself, it brought a sudden feeling of triumph, as he thought of many ways in which he could make this wretched being useful.

"Well, old fellow, how did you find me out?" he asked, in a jocular tone.

"By what you call 'accident,' Carlos—what I call 'a leading.' I was led to lounge about the hotel-door—though I knew not for what—till I saw you come along the street and enter this house. By asking a question here and there and spending my last few dimes among the waiters, I learned that you had been staying here for some time, that you had returned a day or two since from Chicago, and that you were still paying court to the pretty San Franciscan girl whose father will make his son-in-law as well as his daughter a millionaire."

"Right you are, my boy ; but as you know of old, Harry, I am not a marrying man, and an insuperable objection exists to my getting hold of a million in that way. Still, I had about made up my mind to take the plunge. And since there seemed no way of getting old Hamilton's money without his daughter also, I had determined to marry pretty Polly, when, lo and behold, a fabulous fortune, that is mine by right, has almost dropped into my hands ! I am on the track of the hidden treasures of the Mendoza family ; and as I and one other are, so far as I know, the only living descendants of the man who concealed these treasures, and, consequently, their only legitimate heirs, there is a reasonable hope that I may be able to get along without Miss Polly if I choose. Now, listen, Harry, and give me the use of all the mind you've got. Is there really such a thing as clairvoyance, or is it all stuff and nonsense that you professors talk on that subject—a clever trick to gull a stupid public?"



"Such a thing as clairvoyance !" exclaimed Van Tassel. His sunken eyes gleamed, and a flush lit up his gaunt face with momentary fire. "Ask me if such a thing as light exists, if electricity is real, if sound travels through vibrations of the air. Every small schoolboy knows these things now, and can tell you about them better, perhaps, than I can. But I know that clairvoyance is as real as any of these things ; and no one but fools and conceited prigs, who know so much they will never truly know anything, think of questioning the fact of genuine clairvoyance."

Stanley laughed provokingly. He had expected some such outburst and was amused by it.

"All right, Harry," he said. "I am only asking for information. I don't want to dispute your facts. I don't know much about these things. The truth is, they bother me ; and when I try to understand them, they make my head ache. But it makes a lot of difference to me just now to know if they are genuine or humbug."

"Of course, there are oceans of humbug mixed up with the real thing," said Van Tassel, eagerly, "but the great men of science all over the world, nowadays, are investigating these wonderful truths, and, before the end of the century, we shall understand the mystery of the various degrees of the secondary consciousness and of the sub-liminal self—"

"Stop ! Stop !" exclaimed Stanley, with a gesture of comic despair. "I don't want to hear a lecture on psychology. My dear fellow, you should hire a hall. Haven't I told you I can't understand these things ? They make my head spin. I see you are in earnest. I always knew you were. And what I want to learn of you is the *modus operandi*—how to work this clairvoyant



and mesmeric racket when you happen to have the necessary magnetism to produce it.”

“That’s easy enough,” Van Tassel said, with a long sigh, as his momentary enthusiasm left him and he dropped again into the submissive, dejected manner that had become his ordinary condition. “The operator must possess certain mental conditions as well as a peculiar physical temperament, great concentration of will—stronger than that possessed by the subject, and the peculiar magnetism which you have more strongly developed than I have ever known in the case of any other person. That being given, the process is purely mechanical, and consists simply of a certain number of slow, even passes made by the hands over the person to be mesmerized—downward passes to induce the trance, upward to dispel it. You know the passes well enough.”

“Yes ; and glad enough I was to remember them a couple of evenings ago. And that’s what I want your advice about.” And briefly but clearly Stanley related the singular effect of his presence upon Dolores Mendoza when first introduced to her.

Professor Van Tassel sat up, alert and interested ; so much so, that for a moment the dazed, lost look left his face and once more he seemed to have a distinct individuality.

“What you tell me is extremely interesting. From your description of the young lady, I should guess that she possesses the gift of clairvoyance in its highest and rarest form, and if her power should ever be developed she might be of great benefit to the world.”

“I’m not troubling myself about that,” Stanley interrupted flippantly. “I only want her power exercised for my particular benefit—and hers, too, perhaps. I’ve



no particular objection to making it a partnership affair."

"She said that she had a visitor?" asked Van Tassel, musingly.

"Yes; but she didn't seem to remember what it had been when she returned to consciousness, although it had evidently been unpleasant."

"And can you guess at the nature of it?" asked the professor of mesmerism, with a peculiar look; to which Stanley responded defiantly:

"Yes; and it is in order to learn how to gain control of this mysterious gift apparently possessed by this girl that I am now talking with you, Harry. Between you and me there need be no disguises and no mystifications. I have always treated you, personally, with kindness and even with generosity, and in the manner of which we both know, and to which you refer, no one knows better than you do that I acted in self-defense. It was his life or mine. As to all that has happened since, and the use I have made of various advantageous circumstances, I have never been able to see anything particularly criminal in any part of it. But it is my secret and I choose to have it remain so; at the same time, I choose to make use of this girl's extraordinary power, though I *may* be able to get on without it. I am coming to that presently. The awkward thing about her is that if I am able to throw her into the clairvoyant trance at will, she may say a great deal more than I care to hear besides giving me the information I want; and she may also remember things that I prefer to have forgotten."

"You have only to forbid that," said Van Tassel.

"What do you mean? Will she obey me?"

"Certainly," was the answer, with a smile. "That is the simplest form of hypnotic suggestion. Before



you awaken her from the trance, bid her forget everything you don't wish to have her remember. You may also suggest such ideas as you desire to remain in her mind.”

“The deuce! That makes the whole affair as easy as a walk-over.”

“Always provided you are able to put her into the trance. A clairvoyant such as she appears to be is often very difficult to manage. The trance you saw may have been quite independent of any mesmeric power that you possess, although your *presence* may have affected her; and if so, she is liable at any time to pass into what we call the superior condition, in which case she might read the whole past history of any one present, and you could not even silence her. It is very desirable, for your own sake, that you should gain all the power over her that your strong temperament and will give you the opportunity to do.”

While he listened, Clarence Stanley's countenance went through various changes of expression, from animated, bouyant triumph to perplexity, impatience and anger.

“Oh, confound it!” he then exclaimed, as his companion came to the end of his remarks. “I don't understand half you are saying, and I don't believe the other half; but if you are speaking the truth, the señorita's clairvoyant gift is likely to bring me much more trouble than benefit—”

“Not if you can gain control of it,” interrupted Van Tassel, eagerly. “Can't you give me a chance to see her? I have studied this subject deeply; it is the one thing in the world that still has power to interest me; and I think I can detect the quality of any form of clairvoyance by the psychic atmosphere surrounding the sub-



ject. Give me a chance to see this young lady and judge of her power."

"You may see her fast enough," said Stanley, promptly. "Before we part, I will give you money enough to get yourself up respectably ; but remember, there must be no backsliding and making yourself a disgrace to me if I introduce you to the Hamilton family. How is it with you now ? Whisky or brandy or both ?"

"Neither. Drink has been worn out with me long ago ; nothing supplies the necessary stimulus but opium. I have almost wholly lost my will-power, and with it, of course, my power to mesmerize. I abused the gift, and it has left me. I only live, now, under the influence of opium."

"Poor devil !" exclaimed Stanley, in a tone of pitying contempt. "By the way, you used to be great on reading ciphers and all manner of hieroglyphics. It was, as you would say, a gift. Have you lost that, too ?"

While speaking, Stanley had unlocked the drawer of the table beside him, and now taking out the piece of parchment and all the papers on which he had been figuring and drawing, he spread them out before Professor Van Tassel.

"There, Hal, old boy ! Cast your eye over that, and tell me if you have still the power to read the secret of it."

Again a gleam of interest and sudden fire lit up the haggard face of the demoralized mesmerizer, and he bent an eager gaze on the papers placed before him.

"I don't know if I can unlock the mystery here," he said. "The gift you speak of was a part of my other gift, and may have gone from me with the rest. But I will try. I will try."

With trembling fingers, he began sorting and arrang-



ing the scraps which Stanley had so carefully cut out, and his touch seemed to have a strange magic in it, for the pieces appeared to dovetail and fit into each other as if suddenly endowed with independent volition, and from the completed picture emerged the figure of a tall and slender Indian woman, in flowing drapery, but in her lineaments, though fine and delicate, and in her long hair, ornamented with feathers and beads, the unmistakable traces of her race.

“By Jove!” exclaimed Stanley, with unusual excitement. “The Indian princess—our aboriginal ancestress. This is interesting.”

“There are letters—of the English alphabet, apparently—there are twelve of them, and twelve pieces to make up the picture.”

“Yes, I counted the pieces and tried to make out the meaning of them, but I hadn’t got at it. Your arrival interrupted me in the midst of it. But I detected no letters.”

“They are plain enough, however—wrought in with these fine lines that form the picture. See!”

As he spoke, Van Tassel traced with the point of a pencil the outline of the letter “F” in the lines forming the face of the picture.

“Yes, I see it now!” exclaimed Stanley, with a momentary feeling of chagrin at not having discovered it himself. “Go on with the rest. I will write them down as you trace them.”

Van Tassel continued, slowly and carefully and with many failures, but with continuous perseverance, to hunt out the hidden letters. When the twelve had been thus discovered and written in order, they spelled the following words:

“Flower of gold.”

“‘Flower of gold?’” repeated Stanley, completely



mystified. "It is an interesting phrase, but what does it mean?"

Van Tassel put his hand to his head in a dazed manner, and then leaned back in his chair and drew a long breath of disappointment. It was, indeed, a sigh of heartbreaking disappointment.

"Alas!" he said, bitterly, "I cannot tell you what it means; and yet it is all here—here!" and he clasped his trembling hands about his brow, "but so confused and lost I cannot find it."

"You know and cannot tell me!" exclaimed Stanley, his tone quiet with concentrated and impotent rage. He saw that the man was perfectly sincere, although he could not understand his condition of mental wreck; he felt a brutal disposition to shake the remaining life out of the helpless specimen of humanity before him; and then in a moment he was calmed by a new thought that had not till then entered his mind. Perhaps it was fortunate that the professor could go no further; it would only be giving another the secret that belonged to himself exclusively; and it was with almost ludicrous amiability that he continued: "Never mind, old fellow; don't bother your poor old head about it! Perhaps I will work it out some day, myself; and, if not, there is always the wonderful Señorita Dolores Mendoza. Now, if she is the extraordinary clairvoyant you suppose her to be, she could read off this infernal puzzle like print."

"Yes; if I could get my impressions into form I could do it myself," said Van Tassel, fixing his gaze on the parchment with an expression of longing eagerness and utter hopelessness, that even touched the callous heart of Clarence Stanley. "It is all there. I feel it! I know it! But I cannot tell what it is! but—" and he seemed for a moment to rouse into the brightness and



energy that had once characterized him—"you must gain control of the señorita. Your will is stronger than that of most men—you can surely control a woman—remember, you must control *her*, she must *never* control *you*!"

"I guess that's all right," said Stanley, quietly, and there was a dangerous look of evil, concentrated power in his face as he spoke. "And now give me a little further instruction about these mesmeric passes."

Van Tassel explained minutely; and Stanley, absorbed in the idea of using the knowledge he was now acquiring on the susceptible temperament of Dolores Mendoza, stood before the professor, his entire will apparently concentrated in his magnetic gaze, and slowly performed the long, slow, downward passes exactly as he had been directed to do, till, on a sudden, Van Tassel's head fell backward against his chair, and Stanley saw that his eyes were closed as if in death, his face colorless and his breathing so faint as to be almost imperceptible.

The professor lay in a profound mesmeric trance.

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## CHAPTER X.

### A DANGEROUS GIFT.

Stanley's amazement was comic. Notwithstanding his recent experience with Dolores and the fact that he was practicing what he called "the *modus operandi*" of mesmerism, he had not thought of the possibility of throwing Van Tassel into a trance; but, after his first momentary surprise, he was quick to see that the chance which had befallen him might be made to prove a very



lucky one. Although he was profoundly ignorant on the subject of psychology in all its phases, he had, as he would have said, "picked up something of the jargon," and this he now proceeded to make use of.

He brought a couple of pillows from a sofa ; and, having placed them under the professor's head, in order, as he told himself, that "poor old Van sha'n't get a crick in his neck," he drew a chair in front of him, sat down so that he could keep his gaze on the worn, pale, unconscious face, and began to catechise him in a low, incisive tone :

"Are you asleep?" he asked.

To this there was, at first, no reply. Stanley saw the sleeper's face twitch and lips unclosed in the effort to speak, but no sound issued from them. He repeated the question at intervals of a minute, and when this had been done several times Van Tassel's voice was suddenly heard, clear and distinct, but sounding as though it came from a distance. The effect was weird and startling, as if speech had suddenly proceeded from a galvanized corpse, and the words were calculated to increase this effect.

"I am outwardly asleep, but my spirit is fully awake and willing to help you."

Stanley's heart bounded with triumph. He felt that his experiment was becoming very interesting.

"Can you read this parchment?" he asked, indicating the mysterious cipher.

"All that is written or traced on that side we have already made out ; the key to it will be found in the manuscript now in the possession of the Señorita Mendoza."

"What manuscript?" exclaimed Stanley, for he could not remember having spoken to Van Tassel on that subject. "I have said nothing about a manuscript."



"No ; but you are thinking of it at this moment, and I am now in communication with your mind, so that I can read your inmost thoughts."

Stanley involuntarily recoiled with such force as to send his chair backward several feet. What man, even of the most pure and noble mind, would be willing to submit his inmost thoughts to another ? The situation was particularly startling to the Honorable Clarence Stanley. A faint smile passed over the professor's face, and his next words had a touch of satire to the ear of his listener.

"Don't be alarmed," Van Tassel continued ; "I shall know nothing of all this when I return to ordinary consciousness. Go on, get all the information you can ; it is not safe to keep me in this condition too long."

Stanley drew a breath of relief, and hastened to put his ideas into the form of questions.

"How can I gain possession of that manuscript ?"

"To do so will be difficult, perhaps impossible ; but you have already spoken to Polly Hamilton about being present when the manuscript is read. That is your opportunity. You must arrange the details yourself."

"Can't you tell me what the manuscript contains ?"

"I can tell you nothing except what is either mirrored in your own mind or connected with some object in this room. My vision does not travel, it cannot leave the atmosphere controlled by your thoughts. I can feel that the manuscript is connected with the cipher, because both are in your mind."

"And the cipher, then ? Can you tell me no more of that ?"

"Look on the other side of the parchment."

Stanley seized the parchment eagerly, and turned it over.

"It is blank," he said, with an accent of bitter disap-



pointment ; “ there is nothing on it at all—not a line—not a mark !”

“ Apparently so, and yet I can see it closely covered with fine writing. Hold it for a few moments before the fire.”

Feeling very much as if he was in a dream or had passed into a new existence, Clarence Stanley did as he had been directed, and to his amazement he saw, under the action of the glowing heat sent out by the blazing coals, word after word and line after line of fine writing come into existence on the hitherto blank side of the parchment.

Of course he understood the mystery in a moment. The writing had been done by means of some chemically prepared ink, visible only under the action of heat. The writing was so fine and close—the piece of parchment being small—that he was obliged to find a magnifying glass before he could read it. This took some time, and when he had tried the glass he found the writing already so faded and indistinct that he could with difficulty make out a word or two, which only served to show him that the language was Spanish, the same as headed the mysterious cipher on the other side.

“ Confound the man who invented this puzzle,” he thought. “ But, no ! I won’t say that either ; for if it had been a simple one it would not have remained for me to discover it.”

With the magnifying glass in hand, he once more took the piece of parchment to the fire, and as the writing again appeared, he read it word by word, slowly thinking out the English equivalent as each line of the Spanish writing was traced before him by the action of the fire. Having come to the last word, his face flushed with triumph even more than by the glow of the coals, he seated himself by the table, and



made, first, a copy of the writing in Spanish and, afterward, an English translation of the same.

To do this had been a difficult and tedious task, and more than once, as the parchment cooled and the ink faded, he had been obliged to leave off, to recover the writing by the magic of heat ; but at last it was completed, and the well-hidden secret, translated into English, read as follows :

“The spot is twelve paces from a sycamore-tree, out of whose roots grow twelve separate arms (or trunks, perhaps). On the arm (or one of the trunks) is cut the rude outline of an Indian woman, the much-wronged ancestress of the American Mendozas. There the treasure was buried on the night of October 12, 1792, by a descendant of the Indian princess and her treacherous husband. It is believed that her spirit guards the spot. The treasure can only be found by true descendants of the Mendozas. It can only be rightfully possessed by true heirs, male and female, mutually beloved and joined together in lawful wedlock. This secret can only be read by a Mendoza. To all others this parchment is a blank. Every true Mendoza inherits in some form the birthmark of our Spanish ancestry, and in some degree the mystic, spiritual gifts of our Indian ancestry. To that heir who discovers this treasure, and whose heart is honest and his soul pure, be blessing and honor and all happiness in its possession ; but to that heir who wrongfully acquires this treasure, and whose heart is deceitful and his soul impure, may it bring sorrow and loss and all the train of evils cast abroad by the wrong done to the Indian woman from whom we are descended.”

The drawing of a little flower, whose star-like blossom



seemed to tremble on its slender stem, completed the hidden message of the parchment, and under it was written the word "*Anacaona*," through which was drawn an Indian arrow.

"Well," exclaimed Stanley, as he leaned back in his chair, "all the indications point me out as the true heir! I have deciphered the cryptograph! I have discovered the mysteriously hidden message! I bear on my brow the birthmark of the Mendozas, and apparently I possess some mystic gift, or I couldn't so readily have thrown the learned professor into a trance—though of all my claims to be a true descendant of the Mendozas, this last one pleases me least; unless, indeed, it proves valuable in giving me control over that beautiful Spanish girl."

This reflection drew his attention again to the still unconscious Professor Van Tassel; but he failed to see that the man's face showed even paler, more worn and pinched than it had yet looked, while his eyes were so deeply sunken and turned upward under their closed lids that they seemed almost lost in the sockets.

"I have made out the whole story," said Stanley gayly, as he placed his hand on the parchment, from which the appearance of the writing had again faded quite away, and here I have the whole secret of the Mendoza treasure at the tips of my fingers."

"I know it. I have followed you through it all," answered Van Tassel. His voice was very faint and sounded further away than when he had last spoken, but Stanley's own senses were so sharpened by excitement, that he failed to notice the change; "but are you the heir who is likely to obtain happiness in the possession of the treasure?"

"Am I the heir?" exclaimed the other, "of course I am the heir! What do I care for the curse of that



dusky princess? I believe in none of that rubbish! Let me but get these hands of mine on the treasure, and the curse may take wings to itself!"

"But you will not be the only heir; in your character of the Honorable Clarence Stanley, and making your claim through the Countess Windermere, will not your elder brother and his family claim an equal share of the treasure?"

A look of perplexity for a moment came into the face of the listener.

"I certainly did not consider that," he said, sharply, "but no matter! In the first place they are not immortal—both may die; and, besides, the treasure belongs to him who unearths it. I will share it with no one except the fair señorita, and she is saintly enough to avert all possible evil. Tell me, my wise friend, now that you are in what you call the 'superior condition,' shall I ever gain the love of Dolores Mendoza?"

"She will never love you, but there is some strong bond between you. I cannot tell what it is. She is too far away from me and from you. It may be the mysterious tie of blood and inherited tendencies. You may gain a power over her, through that you may perplex and influence her, but I can see no more—"

"No need to, old fellow! That's enough," interrupted Stanley. "Let me gain an influence over any woman, and I will take care of the rest. They are but weak creatures at the best, and already I noticed a difference in that girl. She no longer shrank from me to-day as she did on the occasion of our first meeting."

He spoke merely as if uttering his thoughts aloud, and, when Van Tassel had replied, it had been also like listening to an echo from his own mind. Suddenly, he



became aware of this, and, turning to the unconscious companion beside him, he said imperatively :

“Forget all that has been said and all that has been thought since you fell into the trance ! And now, awake !”

But the professor did not stir, and as Stanley bent forward and looked keenly at him it seemed as if he did not even breathe. The Honorable Clarence felt uncomfortable, but, retaining perfect self-possession, he began to make the upward passes over the pallid face with the same calm deliberation with which he had induced the trance.

“Awake ! Awake !” he said again, in his most imperative tone ; but the professor gave no evidence of obeying ; on the contrary, the trance seemed deeper and more deathlike than before.

A chill of apprehension caused Mr. Stanley a slight shiver, as of cold.

“He can’t be dead !” he muttered. “It would be devilish inconvenient, and just as he promised to be of use to me !”

Again he made the upward mesmeric passes and again he said, in low, intensely concentrated tones :

“Awake !”

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## CHAPTER XI.

### DOLORES IS TROUBLED.

“I don’t like that girl,” said Polly Hamilton, in a tone of great decision, when she found herself alone with Dolores.

“Which of them ?” asked her companion, absently,



while she bestowed a farewell loving glance on the face of her mother, before closing the miniature which she still held in her hand.

"Not Bertha, of course—no one could help liking Bertha ; she's just as sweet and good as she can be ; we have always been the best of friends, and I am really quite fond of her, in a way. Not as I am of you, Rita. I never could love any girl as I love you, dearest ; but the other one—Olive Gaye—I think I could positively hate that girl !"

"How severe you are, Maruja ; but perhaps you are justified in feeling so. I hardly looked at Miss Gaye, and I had no conversation with her. But she seemed to me like a charming girl."

"Exactly, that is just what people call her ; but I don't think I ever in my life liked the sort of young woman that is called 'a charming girl.' And I tell you, dear, my instincts about women never deceive me—Olive Gaye may be charming, but she is not nice."

"I will remember what you say, Maruja, and I will observe if future knowledge of Miss Gaye confirms it."

"But didn't Mr. Stanley look handsome, Rita ? I know you don't like him, and it terrifies me to think that it may be an instinct with you to understand men just as it is with me to understand women. But I hope you will learn to like him a little, Rita, just for my sake, and you must admit that he was very handsome to-day."

"I think him the handsomest man I ever saw," said Dolores, with a sigh. "Perhaps that is not saying much, for I have really seen but few men, or, to be more correct, I have looked at few, and I have never seen any one like Mr. Stanley."

"Oh, you darling !" exclaimed Polly Hamilton. "It makes me quite happy to have you say that, but you



mustn't rush to the other extreme now, and fall in love with him, for I'm afraid I'm awfully jealous by nature, and that would be a terrible complication."

A quick crimson flamed into the clear olive cheeks of Dolores, and some inexplicable emotion thrilled through her to the tips of her fingers. Was it pain or anger or sorrow? It surely could not be pleasure! And then she was conscious of a feeling that certainly seemed like fear. She drew herself quickly away from the embrace of her friend, and answered, coldly:

"No, I don't think I shall fall in love with Mr. Stanley."

"Now I have hurt your feelings, Rita; don't be over-sensitive, dear."

But Dolores protested that she was in no degree offended or hurt. And the two girls presently separated, the former to correct her friend's exercises in Spanish, and the latter to consult one of her assistants in the many charitable works in which she spent both time and money.

With a commendable spirit of independence, Dolores had, from the first, declared that she must be permitted to make herself useful; and Mrs. Hamilton, seeing that it would greatly contribute to her happiness and self-respect to feel a certain independence, engaged the young girl, at a fixed salary, as companion and teacher of Spanish to her daughter.

"Besides which, you are always to be one of us—like our own child, Dolores, for we owe you more than life, in knowing that you risked your own life to save Mary."

The gratitude of the Hamilton family and their affection for her was so genuine that Dolores speedily felt herself as entirely at home, as if she had been with them all her life; and from the hour when she had first seen



Polly Hamilton until the present moment there had not been the slightest jar between the two girls, save in the matter of Clarence Stanley.

Dolores placed Polly's carefully written exercise before her and began reading it, taking up a pen occasionally to correct a word or a phrase, till at last she pushed away the paper, almost impatiently, and murmured half aloud :

"Why am I haunted by that man's face and by the sound of his voice? He is surely not a pleasant memory, and yet I cannot shake off the thought of him. Can it be possible there is any truth in these marvels of hypnotism with which the whole world seems carried away nowadays? And has that man really obtained some uncanny power—as dear mamma would say—over me? Nonsense! I won't allow myself to think of such a thing; it would affect my imagination, and I am just fanciful enough to brood over it, if I once allow myself to dwell on the thought."

She turned resolutely again to the examination of Polly's Spanish exercises, and by an effort concentrated her mind upon the task before her, to the exclusion of all else for the time.

But no sooner were the exercises corrected and neatly folded away in one of the pigeon-holes of her writing-desk than she found herself again thinking of Stanley, while his handsome face came before her so vividly that it seemed painted on the air.

"No wonder dear Polly thinks him handsome!" she thought. "Handsome! How plainly I seem to see him! If one could imagine Saint John and Judas combined in one man, he might have a face like Clarence Stanley's, and dear Polly never sees the Judas look at all. To her he is Saint John all the time. Oh, it is no wonder that she is in love with him! But why does



his face haunt me? Surely, surely, I am not in love with him, or am I going mad?"

She started up and paced the room to and fro for some minutes in a state of great nervous excitement. Then hastily putting on a hat and wrap, she determined to go out and walk off the unusual state of feeling that had so upset her. As she stood for a moment before the mirror, pinning her hat down over the mass of bronze-gold hair, Dolores was vaguely conscious of the change in her own appearance and of her great and unusual beauty. She was at the age when beauty comes suddenly, like the opening of a flower that has been all ready to bloom, but whose homely outside of colorless leaves has given no indication, except to the skilled florist, of the glowing loveliness concealed within. Becoming raiment exquisitely fitted to a perfect form, good and sufficient food, ease, comfort, restful sleep, combined with companionship of her own age and a depth of love and appreciation equal in its way to that which she had enjoyed in her own mother's affection, had wrought for Dolores what seemed to her almost a miracle. She felt a sudden and quite unusual joy in life—an ecstatic triumph in the sense of her own beauty; and Polly Hamilton's exclamation when they came face to face with each other in the corridor was only the echo of Dolores's own thought.

"Oh, Rita, what have you been doing to yourself? Of course, you were always lovely; but you have suddenly become a raving beauty!"

Dolores laughed lightly; and even her laugh was changed, Polly thought, but perfectly charming, too, like everything about her. Until now, Dolores had seldom laughed at all, and when she did, it was a low, gentle sound, full of love and sweetness, like the ripple of running water; but there was a decided ring of



enjoyment to it now, light and musical, but also a trifle superficial, as she replied to her companion's words :

"Oh, it is nothing, Maruja, except that I am a girl like other girls of my age, I suppose, and I have just found it out. Youth will assert itself, I suppose. And I have been old—oh, so old, sometimes, I hardly knew that I could feel young and lightsome like other girls. The knowledge of it has come to me all in a moment, and I suppose it has gone to my head, I feel so strangely excited."

"It is mightily becoming to you !" said Polly, with delighted admiration. "But are you going out?"

"I was going to walk—to be serious and prosaic again. I thought a walk might prove an antidote to the nervous agitation that I am feeling."

"A drive will be better, and I have just ordered the carriage. It is already late in the afternoon, but we can remain an hour or more and still be home in time for dinner. But it would be too late for you to be out walking alone."

Dolores smiled at these words, remembering how she had been accustomed to be out alone at all hours and in the worst localities of the great city ; but she made no other reply, and the two girls were presently being driven through the fashionable avenue and onward into the Park. Throughout their drive Dolores continued in the same overwrought nervous condition, but Polly declared she had never known her so delightfully entertaining. She laughed and jested and talked incessantly, and as her young life, although so sad and full of sorrow and suffering, had also been full of adventure and a thousand unexpected and curious bohemian experiences, her conversation did not lack for amusing and interesting incidents.

They returned home just as the lamps and electric



lights were being turned on, and as they approached their home again, the usual vivacity that had characterized Dolores gradually disappeared, and the reaction to the mood of dreamy abstraction which Mary Hamilton had often observed in her before was very marked. But this lively and light-hearted girl had often deep thoughts ; and now, instead of commenting upon this change of manner, she said to herself :

“On the whole, I don't know but I ought to be very grateful that Rita doesn't feel any enthusiastic admiration for Clarence. Darling Lorita ! She would be a very dangerous rival !”

The change to pensiveness and absent-mindedness on the part of Dolores continued all through dinner-time, and Mr. Hamilton, who admired the strange young Spanish girl and shared with his wife and Mary a feeling of profound gratitude toward her, but to whom she was a greater mystery than womankind generally, rallied her playfully in regard to her apparent unconsciousness of the world about her.

Dolores responded with her customary sweetness, but the effort she made to seem interested and to bring her thoughts back to earth again was so evident to Polly that she immediately took possession of her when they left the table.

“How was my exercise, Mistress Governess ?” she asked, laughingly. “Do I improve in my Spanish ?”

“Oh, yes, indeed ; there were not more than six mistakes,” said Dolores.

“Six ! Oh, I am doing splendidly ! There used to be about sixteen to the page. Come and show me and explain the corrections.” And when they were alone together Mary said :

“Never mind the exercise just now, dear. I saw that



papa's teasing was too much for you. I'm afraid our drive has tired you."

"I am afraid I am more than tired, Maruja," said Dolores, gravely. "I am under some strange influence; I have felt it more or less since I first met Mr. Stanley."

Mary started and almost gasped with surprise, but she resisted the inclination to speak. Dolores continued:

"I don't know what it is or how to describe it; but, perhaps there is some truth in these stories of hypnotism and the mysterious occult influences of mind upon mind. When you understand that I have, perhaps, inherited a peculiar organization from my strangely mixed ancestry, you will not wonder so much that I am a little strange and unlike other girls. I am going to read that manuscript to you now, at any time you please. You yourself shall appoint the time."

"Oh, thank you, dearest Rita! And Clarence, too—you will let him be present?"

"Oh, yes; if Mr. Stanley is really related to me, it is his right to some extent. It may be of value to him to know that we inherit a strain of evil, that it requires all our possibilities of good to oppose."

"How seriously you take it all, Lorita! Why, it is nothing but a legend," said Mary, but feeling somewhat awed in spite of herself at the grave, almost prophetic manner of her friend.

"Life is serious, Maruja, though I hope you will never know how terribly serious it may be at times. Yours should be all sunshine. It seems as if intended for nothing but joy. But mine has been full of mystery, and now it seems more so than ever. I feel at this moment as if some appalling fate overshadowed me—as if I were mysteriously linked to some great unknown wrong, of



which I am as innocent as I am ignorant—and now I feel that some one near to me is in great danger—danger from which I ought to help him. Ah, be strong, resist, awake ! Awake !”

Mary Hamilton felt a chill of terror take possession of her, as she beheld Dolores become more and more excited till, with the last words, she stretched out her hands imploringly, her face pale but strangely exalted in expression, while her beautiful eyes, gazing into space, glowed like fiery jewels and were luminous as if from some inner light. Slowly the rapt look passed from her face, a faint rose-color came into her cheeks, and she murmured :

“ He is safe—she never fails me—and now I have seen her face !”

A slight shiver passed over her and, with a long sigh, she turned and met Polly Hamilton’s anxious, awe-struck, half-terrified gaze.

“ Oh, Maruja, have I frightened you ? I am so sorry.”

“ Frightened me !” gasped Polly, “ I should say so ! You have about scared the wits out of me ; but I have a gleam of sense left. I am going this instant to send for Doctor Mac. I know you are going to have some awful illness—a brain-fever or something—”

“ Not at all,” said Dolores. “ See, take my hand—feel my pulse—I am perfectly calm. All the recent excitement has left me, and I feel well and happy.”

And, indeed, Mary Hamilton could not but see that a very tranquilizing change had passed over her friend, and, so far as her physical condition could show, she seemed to be entirely well.

“ You are a wonderful creature,” she said in a perplexed tone, “ and I shall never understand you at all ; but, of course, that makes you far more interesting,



like reading a story in an indefinite number of volumes. Well, then, I won't send for Doctor Mac this time. Let us look over my Spanish exercise."

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## CHAPTER XII.

### AN ACCIDENTAL KISS.

Clarence Stanley stood helplessly gazing at the unconscious Professor Henri Van Tassel. He had tried his most imperious tones and had quite exhausted his knowledge of mesmeric passes, but the professor's eyes continued closed, and the heavy lids seemed glued together.

Stanley had grown quite pale, and a sense of his unpleasant predicament was beginning to make him very uncomfortable.

"He isn't shamming!" he muttered. "Can he be really dead? Perhaps I had better send for a doctor. It's going to be deuced unpleasant—coroner's inquest, reporters, morning papers and all the rest of it."

He bent over Van Tassel and raised the lid of one eye, then of the other, and in doing this his fingers unconsciously pressed upon the eyeballs. A slight quiver passed over the ashen face, the lips parted and the breath came through them in a faint, long-drawn sigh.

"Halloa! He's coming to!" said Stanley. And he recommenced the upward passes with his fine, long white hands, rapidly now, so that it seemed as if wings were waving over the professor's face. And, with a supreme effort of will, he said once more:



“Awake !”

The closed eyelids opened like a flash of light, so quick, so bright was the returning intelligence that flashed from them, and, raising his head from the pillow against which it had been resting, Van Tassel sat upright with an alert and eager manner, such as seldom characterized him in the degenerate condition to which he had fallen.

“I have seen her !” he said. “What a beautiful face ! She is a wonder—a true clairvoyant of the highest type. Beware how you trifle with her, Carlos, for hers is a greater power than you or I can ever hope for in this lower world. Her pure spirit soars to higher realms than we can even dream of.”

“What the mischief are you talking about ?” interrupted Stanley, impatiently. “You are still asleep, I think. Whom have you seen ?”

“The lady you call ‘cousin,’ the Señorita Mendoza, for a moment only ; but for her you could never have recalled me from the trance. I warned you that it was dangerous, but through your constant thought of her I was able to implore her aid. Oh, Carlos, you have gained a great power over me ; but promise me—I implore you by all we have known of each other in the past—promise me to use this power for good.”

“Certainly,” returned Stanley, flippantly. “I use all things for good—my own good. But look here, Van, quit calling me Carlos ; you’ve said it several times already, and you’ll get in the habit of it. You know as well as I do that my name is Clarence Stanley.”

“Yes,” returned the listener, abjectly, “the Honorable Clarence Stanley. I shall not forget.”

“And now we had better part. This *séance* has lasted long enough for one evening. It is getting late, and I



am hungry. Here is money ; help yourself, and come to me for more when you need it."

He unlocked a drawer in an escritoire in another part of the room, and the eyes of the wretched professor sparkled with delight at sight of the gold and rolls of bank-notes contained in it ; but he made no movement to help himself as he had been invited to do. Stanley, who, with an almost insane passion for gold, was lavish in his expenditure of it, grasped a full hand of the coins and notes and gave them to Van Tassel.

"There, old fellow," he said, with careless good-nature, "'get yourself in flesh,' as the chap in the play says, and also get yourself some decent clothes, to pass for a gentleman against the next time you come to see me. And, now, good-bye. It is long past dinner-time, and I am hungry myself."

Van Tassel took the money eagerly and crushed it into his pockets. His manner was more than ever that of a slave obeying a master ; and yet there was an unusual look of life and eagerness about him, as if he had unconsciously imbibed something of the energy of the man who dominated him.

"Clarence," he said, "I was never mesmerized before to-night. When I possessed the power, no one I ever knew could overcome it, but I always felt that you could have the power if you chose. I am not sorry ; it has done me good ; only, for pity's sake, dear boy, don't abuse it. Use your power for good."

"All right ; haven't I already told you that I always do ; and, now, good-bye ! You really must go," and as the door closed after the professor, the Hon. Clarence stretched his arms above his head, yawned copiously and dropped into a chair.

"This hypnotizing business is exhausting work," he said ; "if this is how Van used to feel, I can understand



his need of a stimulant. Poor old Van ! He's just about crazy on the subject, and what an awful bore if one didn't choke him off from time to time. But it has been a good day. The Mendoza treasure secret unearthed and several valuable hints as to how I may be able to gain some occult power over that Spanish girl. What a fine creature she is—a new type of woman altogether ; but I must be careful how I let myself get too much interested in her. It needs no Professor Van Tassel to point out that danger. I've seen other men in love, and they are a warning to me. Have I, by chance, the capacity within me to be really in love with any woman ? I think not. But all the same, Clarence, my lad, I shall hold your fancies well in hand when you are in the presence of the Señorita Dolores Mendoza."

Stanley had been hurriedly dressing as he thought and occasionally permitted his thoughts to run into words ; and now as he paused before the largest mirror in his room, to put the finishing touches to his toilet, he was hugely pleased with himself, and more than conscious of his own physical advantages. Like a great many men of his kind, he thought himself rather a good fellow than otherwise ; and if a severe judge of character had told him plumply that he possessed all the qualifications for a complete scoundrel, and had used his natural capacities in that line to great advantage, he would have been sincerely surprised. As he now gazed at the reflection of his own well-featured and finely colored countenance, he smiled complacently and felt how natural it was that he should always have been so great a favorite with women of all conditions and ages. It was his face as it now looked with which he was familiar, and he would have been almost as much surprised as Polly Hamilton could he have seen it at times when his mind was bent on acquiring money



or at moments when other evil tendencies were entirely in the ascendant.

"Well, I have a good many irons in the fire just now," he thought, "and between the lot I must certainly be able to smooth out the various little crumples and rumples that beset my career in life. If the Mendoza treasure turns out to be a myth, the earldom of Windermere and a fat rent-roll aren't such a bad look-out, and may yet be mine ; and if all else fails, there is always Polly—dear, charming little Polly."

And whistling an air from the opera—Polly Hamilton's favorite air—Mr. Clarence Stanley at last turned from the mirror, glanced about the room to be quite sure that all drawers had been carefully locked, and with a light step went forth in search of dinner. Having dined, Stanley wandered about aimlessly, dropped into one or two theatres, not being sufficiently interested to know what the play had been about when he came out ; and at last, being in the neighborhood of his hotel, he returned to his room and went to bed. In the morning, he found himself somewhat despondent and inclined to take himself to task for wasting time on anything so chimerical as the Mendoza treasure ; a quest which, as he very well knew, had brought only loss, despair and death to many a member of his family.

"Am I," he questioned, "behaving like a fool thus to be hazarding the substance for the shadow ? There is pretty Polly Hamilton, with all her father's millions, waiting to drop into my arms, and all that I have to do is simply to open them. Wouldn't it be the part of wisdom and good common sense to go to see Polly ; and, well, perhaps, hold out my arms ?"

And full of these thoughts, which showed an uncommon degree of vacillation on the part of Clarence Stan-



ley, he betook himself toward the home of the Hamiltons at an unusually early hour that afternoon. But, almost unconsciously to himself, there was in his mind the thought that he would see Dolores, and perhaps obtain the hearing of that mysterious manuscript, the story of which would, he fancied, shed light on much that was still obscure to him in the history of his own family. And fate itself seemed to declare in his favor on this day; for Polly met him, radiant with delight at his arrival, and triumphant in the knowledge that Dolores had promised to read the manuscript within that very hour if he should come.

"She declared you were coming," said Polly, "and I believe she's a witch—a lovely, fascinating witch—for everything she says comes to pass. She has gone to her room now, to get the papers, because she said she felt that you were coming. Now, Clarence, how in the world should she have known that, when even I, who have known you so well and for so long a time, couldn't be quite sure of it?"

"But you ought to have known, Polly," said Clarence, with a world of meaning in his large, dark eyes that were now gazing deep into the frank and innocent eyes of Mary Hamilton, raised to his with a look so childlike and confiding, that even his tough conscience felt a twinge.

They were standing together just where she had met him as he entered the room; and he was still holding her hand in a clasp that brought the warm blood in a tide of crimson blushes to her face.

"I always know when you are near, Polly. Ah, if you loved *me*, dear one—"

"Oh, Clarence!" exclaimed Polly, "do I not? When have I not loved you?"

"Really, truly, Polly?"



"Better than my life!"

He had not meant to say so much. As he told himself afterward, it had been a mere accident. He certainly had not meant to commit himself so irrevocably; but when Polly spoke these words: "Better than my life!" and in speaking them raised her pretty rosy mouth toward his, she was so irresistible that Stanley bent and kissed her, and was ever afterward rather proud of the impulse that made him do so; for as he declared to himself:

"A fellow would be a brute not to kiss a pretty girl when she so evidently expected it."

"Hush!" said Polly. Then, gently withdrawing from the half embrace in which he held her: "Here comes Lorita."

And almost with the words Dolores entered. She held the roll of manuscript in her hand, and was evidently ready to begin the reading of it at once; and nodding slightly to Stanley, almost as if she had already seen him, she seated herself at a little distance and near one of the windows.

"We shall not be interrupted," said Polly. "That is why I received you here in this little boudoir, Clarence. You are the only gentleman, except papa, who ever enters this room. It is sacred to my girl-friends, and I hope you will appreciate the honor. I have given orders that no one shall interrupt us, Rita."

Dolores answered only by one swift look of thanks, and, smoothing out the pages of writing, she glanced hurriedly through them.

"It is here," she said. "I make no apology for it. And I can only guess, the writing being my father's, that he was the compiler as well as the writer. I have called it 'A Legend of the Mendozas.'"



*"A LEGEND OF THE MENDOZAS.**"PART FIRST.*

"A tropic sea so beautiful that nature furnished no other blue so deep, so rich, so wonderful with which one can compare it. A tropic sky without one cloud as far as the eye can see, and in the west the fading tints of sunset dying in a soft blending of purple, gold, mauve, pink and palest green—a color that, as it slowly fades into the night, leaves on the soul a hush like the last notes of exquisite music—and through all, the warm, sweet breath of the tropics blown from lands of spice and laden with the perfume of strange, rare fruits and flowers.

"Over this tranquil sea were sailing three ships, bound for a shore to which it may be no ship had ever sailed ; certain it is, no such ships had ever till then been seen in these waters, for they came from many thousand miles away, and they carried the first links of the great chain that was henceforth to bind the old world to the new. The largest and the chief of these vessels was called the *Santa Maria*, and on its deck now stood the man whom Queen Isabella of Spain had named 'Our Admiral of the Seas, Don Christopher Columbus.' His was a form and face to attract attention anywhere and to compel admiration even from envy and detraction. He was taller by several inches than any other man on board, well-formed and muscular, and he possessed the elevated and dignified bearing that bespeaks a conscience at peace with itself, a heart devoted to the world's good and a mind full of noble, lofty, unselfish thoughts. His face was long, somewhat thin, and marked with certain lines peculiar to discoverers and inventors. His complexion was fair and



inclined to ruddiness, and his skin of the extreme delicacy that becomes freckled on exposure to the sun. His cheek-bones were high and his nose of a fine, but pronounced aquiline. His eyes were a clear, pale gray that deepened almost to black under the stress of feeling. When excited, they glowed as if lit by inward fire, but in repose, they were softly yet lustrously luminous. The whole countenance denoted the temperament which belongs to genius : nervous, sensitive, thoughtful and highly imaginative. Even at the early age of thirty the hair of Columbus had turned gray ; but now it was snow-white ; and reaching almost to his shoulders, it gave him an air of extreme benevolence as well as of patriarchal authority. His dress was simple but rich, and his manners, engaging and affable, were the outward expression of that only true breeding, gentleness and Christian charity.

“ Of the other two vessels of this fleet, one was called the *Pinta*, and the other the *Niña*. They were mere barks called caravels, open, but built up high at the prow and stern, with forecastles and cabins for the accommodation of the crew, the *Santa Maria* being the only one of the three provided with a full deck. The *Pinta* was commanded by Martin Alonzo Pinzon ; and the *Niña* was in command of another of the name, Vicente Yañez Pinzon. The crews of these ships, though numbering some few good and honest sailors, were mostly worthless men who had been pressed into this service by any means that could be found. From the first they had been dissatisfied. Superstitious, as are all seamen, they regarded every mischance, however slight, as an omen of disaster, and when, finally, after leaving the Canary Island, they had lost in the deeping distance the last faint, gray, cloudlike trace of land, it seemed to



their doubting and fearing hearts that they had 'literally taken leave of the world !'

"In vain their brave commander sought to inspire them with some reflection of his own intrepid spirit. Tears and loud lamentations were their only response. From his fertile imagination, Columbus described in glowing words the glorious countries to which he would lead them ; and so vivid was the picture he painted to their fancy and so real to his own believing soul, that, at happy moments, they saw the future even as he showed it to them. But too soon their brief hopefulness gave place to fresh fears, and the slightest change of the fair and favoring breezes that wafted them onward was sufficient to plunge them once more into despair. The voyage had already occupied ten weeks, and to the impatient and almost mutinous sailors it seemed interminable. They were not victualed for such a voyage. And what would become of them if food should fail ? Even the beauty of the ocean alarmed them, for they declared that everything in these waters was so strange and unusual that its very tranquillity boded evil.

"Against these childish fancies Columbus argued with patience, but his listeners now scarcely heard his words. Their selfish terrors varied and multiplied their imaginary dangers faster than he could think of arguments to reason them away.

"The situation of Columbus was now indeed approaching desperation ; but with the heroism of a great mind, his spirit constantly rose to meet each new trial to which it was subjected. He was aware of the mutinous condition of his crew ; he even knew that they had determined to throw him overboard and turn the vessel homeward unless they saw land within a certain number of days. But in the face of all trials, confronted



with a danger that not only menaced his life but threatened to destroy the great object of his existence, this extraordinary man maintained a serene and steady countenance, soothing the more tractable of his men with gentle and hopeful words, offering to the ambitious the stimulus of future wealth and power and threatening the most refractory with signal punishment should their murmurs ever take the form of open acts of insubordination.

“Among the worst and most insidious of these malcontents was a Spaniard named Pedro Raphael Mendoza, a man of a strange and curiously mixed nature, possessed of sufficient good qualities to make him more difficult to deal with than if he had been wholly evil and with just enough cleverness to make him dangerous. Mendoza occasionally boasted that some of the bluest blood in Spain flowed in his veins, and he bore on his left temple, as an heirloom, the family mark of a certain branch of the Mendoza family. This mark was a mole, small, heart-shaped and as perfect in form as if it had been traced by the pencil of an artist, and as black as ink.”

“What is that?” exclaimed Clarence. “Pardon me, fair cousin! Will you read those words again?”

Dolores gravely repeated the description of the birthmark, and then she resumed her reading of the “Legend:”

“Mendoza was a handsome man, tall for a Spaniard, being almost the height of the admiral, and of a figure whose grace and symmetry had captured many a female heart. His complexion was pale olive, his eyes large, lustrous and of midnight darkness, and his glossy hair as black as the Mendoza birthmark, which it always carefully concealed except when accidentally pushed aside. He had been the most unwilling man in



the crew of the *Santa Maria* on that memorable Friday, August 3, 1492, when she sailed out of Saltes. Though he had joined the expedition of his own free will, he chose now to consider that he had come aboard on compulsion. The ruling passion of his nature, to which in all times and seasons he continued faithful, was avarice. Gold was the god that this man worshiped, and it was while his fancy was captured by the glowing descriptions of riches to be gathered in this voyage that he had determined to join this expedition in search of a new world—a world in the far west, where he might in reality pluck apples of pure gold, no longer fabled.

“Next to gold Mendoza loved the young wife and the pretty child whom he had left in Spain. But he had parted easily from Juanita while his thoughts were filled with the wealth he was to seize; and he had laughingly kissed her, desiring her to weep on, however, till her tears should swell the ocean, as he meant to bring back a pearl for every tear. Unable to reach his soul with her own sorrow, poor Juanita raised the little sleeping Raphael and laid his warm, glowing face against his father’s. The child waked at the touch and, crowing and laughing with delight, clasped his little arms about Mendoza’s neck.

“‘Thou canst not leave him, Pedro!’ cried Juanita, radiant. ‘Ah, beloved, thou canst not leave *us*!’

“Mendoza tossed the child up in the air, and caught and kissed him as he came down. The boy’s bright brown hair was tumbled and tossed about, and on the left temple showed the birthmark—the very copy of his father’s, except that, instead of black, it was a bright and glowing red. Pedro detested this mark; more even than on himself he detested this blood-red mark upon his child’s brow; but now he forgot to be angry. Even in the exhilaration of his spirits and in the triumph



of the future, he rejoiced in it. He kissed the spot of glowing color, as he said :

“ ‘Yes, and rubies I will bring, too—rubies as bright as the blood-red heart on my Raphael’s temple, and pearls as pure as the tears of Juanita. And now, sweet-hearts, I must be gone. The tide waits not on any man, and I must go with it. *Adios, adoís*, until I come again !’

“But all this was changed now. Weeks had passed since Mendoza had said the last good-bye to the weeping Juanita, and what he chose to call ‘a madman’s voyage into an unknown sea’ was like to be his only reward for wasted time and a long, perhaps an endless parting from the only creatures he had ever loved. His golden dreams had faded, and he bitterly felt that he had thrown away the substance for the shadow. Juanita was neither gold nor pearls nor rubies ; but she was *real*, and he was suddenly animated with a great longing once more to possess that which was real, however insufficient, instead of the shadowy vapors of glorious riches that could never be more than a dream. For these and for other reasons, he opposed the further continuance of the voyage, and he used all his powers to foment dissatisfaction on board the *Santa Maria*.

“This being the state of affairs in the ship commanded by the admiral himself, it may easily be surmised with what difficulty the two Pinzons maintained even a show of discipline in the two vessels under their charge.

“To add to the general despair, the winds suddenly blew contrary, then ceased altogether. From this time forward, for fourteen days, fate seemed determined to try of what stuff was made the soul of Christopher Columbus. According to his strangely mistaken idea that he was sailing toward the farthest shores of the Indies, the ‘admiral of the ocean seas’ now supposed



himself to be nearing the island of Cipango [Japan], which, with the contiguous islands, he had delineated on a chart for the guidance of himself and his men.

“After each latest disappointment, the murmuring and despondency of the sailors increased, and although the signs of land continued and grew more frequent, Columbus found it impossible to again raise the spirits of his crew. Even Martin Alonso Pinzon, who had hitherto been a stanch believer in ultimate success, now began to waver in allegiance to the commander of the expedition.

“Columbus observed this with a momentary feeling of dismay. The captain of the *Pinta* was an important person in this small squadron ; and fearing that the ships might by chance, or otherwise, get separated, the admiral issued orders that they should keep within sound of each other's voices. Pinzon suggested that they should stand more to the south, but Columbus resolutely maintained a course due west. This further increased the feeling of dissatisfaction.

“Great flights of birds now appeared ; the color of the water varied every few hours to paler blue, then to clear gray, occasionally to light green and back again to blue ; dolphins were seen in great numbers, and flying fish leaped into the air like flocks of birds, often falling on the deck among the sailors. These signs of land sometimes diverted the men, and insensibly encouraged them ; but the same sullen silence prevailed ; for Columbus had declared that any man who should again give premature notice of the appearance of land should thenceforth forfeit all claim to the proffered reward.

“It was on the evening of October 7 that the admiral himself decided to alter his course. He had observed flights of field-birds flying to the southwest, and he



knew they must be going toward food and a resting-place. For three days they sailed west-southwest, and the further they went the more encouraging became the signs of land. The sailors, however, were not easily beguiled into new hope. The sight of birds, small and of various colors, such as must have had their homes not very far away—even the appearance of tunny-fish, a heron, a duck, a pelican, as well as fresh, green herb-age floating on the water—all these tokens they chose to regard as so many delusions leading them to destruction.

“In the midst of general despondency, Mendoza regained all his old ambition and hope of gain. He was a good sailor, and his intelligence far exceeded that of the rest of the crew. He understood as well as Columbus himself that the indications of land pointed to absolute certainty of its early appearance; and he was quick to see that he could make himself of future importance and a favorite with the commander, by showing the utmost confidence in his predictions. He was also fired anew by the hope of obtaining the reward.

“In proportion, therefore, as his fellows clamored against the continuance of the voyage, Mendoza showed sanguine expectation. They insisted that Columbus should turn homeward; Mendoza hopefully continued to look out for land. At length, the mutinous disposition of his crew showed itself so openly, that Columbus, at the end of his patience, sternly bade them ‘Cease to murmur!’ The expedition, he declared, with that authority they never dared defy, had been sent by their sovereign and his in search of unknown lands; and, let come what might, the expedition should go forward until, by the blessing of God, who had chosen him for the purpose, he had accomplished the enterprise.

“This decided and unflinching attitude set Columbus



at open variance with his crew, and, notwithstanding his undaunted spirit, there were moments when his soul seemed clouded in darkness. At such a time it was natural that his heart, by nature gentle, confiding and affectionate, should turn with positive gratitude toward Pedro Mendoza. He forgave and, indeed, forgot that this man had previously used his influence among the sailors to foment their discontented and rebellious feelings. If he remembered this at all, he also remembered how much more cause for doubt and fear there had been ; and he more than excused Mendoza because of the confidence he now displayed. Nor was the conduct of Pedro without its effect on the rest of the crew. He was so much nearer their own level that they could comprehend him. Their great leader they could insolently call, among themselves, ‘ A crazy visionary ;’ but Pedro was no visionary. If Pedro was satisfied, there must be something in it ; and on the strength of Pedro’s confidence, there was a sudden revulsion of feeling among the sailors. Once more hope took the place of gloom, and before this happy reaction could pass away, the signs of land were such as no longer to admit of doubt. As on previous occasions, the joy of expectation became so great that the much-tried commander found their excitement almost as unmanageable as their previous dejection. In proportion as his companions grew hopeful, Pedro Mendoza grew moody. His keen gaze looked far ahead with an eagerness that saw a possible shore in every mistlike outline ; but he feared to peril success by calling out too soon ; although more than once, in the crystal-clear atmosphere before sunset, he felt certain that he saw land, and in his heart he cursed the admiral for that precaution which now prevented him from proclaiming his discovery.

“ As the evening drew on Columbus himself took up



a position on the spot whence he could, to the best advantage, range his eye along the dusky horizon. At ten o'clock he saw a light glimmering far off. Pedro also saw this light or thought he did, but sparks of fire seemed dancing before his eyes, and he dared not believe it real. The light disappeared, or perhaps it had never existed ; at any rate it was no longer seen. The ships moved slowly on till two o'clock in the morning. At that hour there was a loud, shrill cry of 'land' from the lips of Mendoza, on board the *Santa Maria*, and from a sailor named Rodrigo de Triana on board the *Pinta* ; and in the same instant both cries were drowned in the report of a gun, fired by order of Martin Alonso Pinzon. For a little while the ships continued their course, till, all in a moment, land was plainly seen but a few miles ahead, when they took in sail and lay to, impatiently waiting for the full dawn of day.

"No words can describe the excitement of the men as they now rested, after all the doubts, the trials, the terrors of their long voyage, waiting to feast their eyes on the shores they had reached. But in the midst of it the admiral stood, absorbed in thought, rapt in silent communion with his soul ; glad, triumphant, but, above all, grateful that he had been permitted to accomplish his object. The mystery of the ocean was penetrated ; a new world was open to posterity ; and the name of the poor adventurer—a man that had been the scoff of sages and the idle mock of the ignorant would now be lifted into a glory as bright and deathless as the stars !

"The dawn came quickly—that glorious morning of October 12, 1492, by the Old-Style calendar ; October 21, by our present calendar.

"Before them the voyagers saw a beautiful island, many leagues in extent, its shores lined with trees almost to the water's edge and beyond that, fine groves



of trees like orchards. It was evidently populated, for the inhabitants could be seen in every direction, running to and fro, appealing to each other with gestures of mingled astonishment and fear, as they pointed to the ships that had arrived in the night. To the Spanish sailors these natives of the New World were as singular and wonderful as the ships with their crews were to 'the savages ;' and they were all impatient to make closer acquaintance with them.

"Columbus ordered the boats to be manned and armed. He entered his own boat, richly attired in brilliant scarlet and carrying the royal standard ; and, with hearts beating high with triumph, they approached the new and marvelous shore, charmed alike with the purity of the atmosphere, the transparency of the water and the wonderful richness of the vegetation. The admiral declared the New World to be 'an earthly Paradise.'

"At all times a devout man, with a soul overflowing with adoration of the Creator, the first act of Columbus, on landing, was to fall on his knees, and, with tears of gratitude, return thanks to God for their deliverance from many dangers and their safe arrival on this long-sought shore. He then reverently bent and kissed the earth, and, rising, drew his sword, unfurled the royal standard of Spain and took solemn possession, in the name of Ferdinand and Isabella, naming the island San Salvador. The enthusiasm of the Spanish sailors knew no bounds, and those who had behaved the most insolently toward their noble leader now prostrated themselves, entreating his pardon and promising henceforth the most implicit obedience.

"Columbus, with natural generosity, accepted both apologies and promises, finding it impossible to blur the triumph of his success even by just and necessary severity.



“Although ‘the Indians’ (as the Spaniards called them) at first fled, curiosity and the encouraging gentleness of Columbus soon brought them back, and they proved to be as guileless and hospitable as they were timid. They were soon offering to the strangers everything of their best, accepting in return the most trivial articles as gifts from the gods.

“Their language, however, was foreign to the interpreters with whom Columbus had provided himself, but they were quick at pantomime, having all the keenness of perception peculiar to untutored people, and the little that was to be known about the island was soon learned.

“A few of the natives, apparently of more importance than their fellows, wore ornaments of gold ; and when they understood from Columbus that it was his wish to find this precious metal, they explained, by signs, that it could be found on many adjacent islands, the position of which they indicated to him. The Spaniards, then, soon prepared to leave San Salvador, having first taken on board a supply of water and such simple food and fruits as the natives could offer ; and notwithstanding the entreaties of these simple beings, who confidently believed that the new arrivals were divine and had descended from the sky, they left this lovely island, on the third day after landing on it, to pursue their adventurous search for more profitable shores.

“There was now no further grumbling among the Spanish sailors. Truly ‘things seen are mightier than things heard ;’ their former lack of confidence in the admiral was changed to faith and veneration, and they were almost as ready as the simple savages to believe him above ordinary humanity.

“The next landing was made upon an island about five or six leagues distant ; but though Columbus found



the inhabitants gentle and willing to display such treasures as they possessed, he was again disappointed in his quest for gold. Some of the Indians wore anklets and bracelets of the precious metal, and a few were further decorated with strings of pearls. These ornaments they readily bestowed on the Spaniards, in exchange for bright-colored beads and hawks' bells, with which they were mightily pleased ; and they told them the gold and the pearls could be found on other islands not far distant, which they described and named.

“ While cruising about from island to island, Pedro Mendoza had kept an eager watch on all that happened ; and although gold was an article of royal monopoly and Columbus had forbidden all traffic in it without his permission, Pedro had already possessed himself of several specimens of what the Indians too soon learned to denominate ‘the Spaniard’s god.’ His avarice led him toward it by an attraction as mysterious, but as sure as that of the iron to the loadstone ; and already the thought had crossed his mind of deserting the expedition in order more freely and entirely to give up his life to his most passionate desire. Among this simple people, he might reign a king, possessed of wealth greater than was ever owned by the sovereigns of his native land ; and in such ambitious dreams the memory of Juanita and little Raphael had already grown so faint that for days and even weeks he forgot to think of them. What had at first been like a dream, a fantasy, soon took the shape of reality, and Mendoza found himself devising a plan by which he could fulfill his purpose.

“ Columbus and his followers had landed upon a most beautiful island, one of which, in his journal, he



wrote with such enthusiasm that the reader, even at this distant day, is thrilled by the description of it.

“‘The groves are marvelous, and in all the island everything is green as it is in April in our own Andalusia. The singing of the birds is such, that it seems as if one would never desire to depart hence ; there are flocks of parrots that obscure the sun, and other birds large and small of so many different kinds that it is wonderful . . . . Trees of a thousand varieties, each having its particular fruit, and all of marvelous flavor . . . and so soft and good is the air from all manner of flowers, that it is the sweetest thing in the world . . . here, indeed, one could live forever !’

“And it was here that Pedro Mendoza finally resolved to stay, for a secret prescience—the magnet that responded to the love of gold within his soul—told him that on this charmed spot he would yet find the treasure he sought.

“The natives on this island were in every way superior to any the Spanish adventurers had yet encountered, but they were simple in nature ; and, as the others had done, they firmly believed Columbus and his followers to be angelic visitors descended from the sky. They said, in answer to the usual inquiries for gold, that the island abounded with the precious metal, but must be sought in the interior, where lived a great prince, surrounded by warriors, all of whom wore ornaments of gold and whose wives and daughters wore strings of pearls and precious stones about their necks and on their arms and ankles.

“This was joyful tidings for Columbus, who felt that he had now reached the true Eldorado. He determined to send envoys to the court of this barbaric prince,



while he and the rest of his followers investigated more closely the shores of the island. The natives had told him that the prince lived a long distance away—a four days' journey—and he was not expecting the return of his messengers within eight or ten days ; for he had commanded them to bring back full accounts of all they should find and also specimens of the gold and treasures of the interior. When, therefore, they returned several days sooner than he expected them, reporting that neither prince nor gold nor any kind of treasure was to be discovered, he was bitterly disappointed ; but Pedro Mendoza, who had been one of the messengers, exulted. In the disappointment of Columbus he saw his own triumph ; the hour for which he had waited and hoped was now at hand.

The admiral at once decided to leave this island and sail further in search of the river whose waters flowed over sands of gold. A young Indian girl had described this river to him as being in an adjacent island called Babeque. It is supposed that this word was not the name of the island, but an epithet descriptive of its people or its productiveness, and that the admiral's ignorance of the Indian language caused him to mistake it for the name of a place. To the great delight of Mendoza, and to the dissatisfaction of the rest of his crew, he decided at once to set sail in quest of Babeque. Discontent had again broken forth among the sailors, although as yet nothing of it had reached the ears of Columbus ; but Pedro knew that Martin Alonso, captain of the *Pinta*, had sworn to part from Columbus, in order to make discovery on his own account. Pinzon and his crew, and indeed all the sailors, considered that Columbus made too great haste to leave these islands before he had thoroughly investi-



gated their resources or even permitted his men the enjoyment of a change from ocean to land.

“The threatened desertion of the *Pinta* gave Mendoza the opportunity for which he had been watching. When the order was given to return to the boats he concealed himself and was nowhere seen. He feared a search might be made for him if his absence was observed, but he had given out among his fellows an intention to join the crew of the *Pinta*. This would, of course, anger the admiral, whom he hated ; but, as the *Pinta* would also have deserted before the morning, anger would be useless. It pleased Mendoza to think of his commander's dismay when he should discover the desertion of Martin Alonso with his ship and crew ; and it pleased him still more to picture to himself the distress of Columbus at the loss of ‘a faithful follower,’ if he should ever be rejoined by the *Pinta*. This man hated the admiral with the instinctive hate of evil toward good and for personal reasons besides. The reward for the first sight of ‘land’ had been awarded to the sailor on board the *Pinta*, although Mendoza swore that he had first proclaimed it. This reward was finally given to the commander himself, as being the real discoverer, from his having first descried a light moving along the shore of San Salvador.

But this act Pedro Mendoza never knew ; and if he had, it would only have intensified his hate of Christopher Columbus. With a triumphant heart he watched the preparations for leaving the island ; and from a secure hiding-place his gaze followed the other sailors, accompanied by great numbers of the natives, as they slowly took their way to the water's edge, where they entered the boats and soon rowed to the three ships at anchor in the beautiful bay.

“It was characteristic of this singular and self-con-



tained being that even while he beheld the departing vessels lessening every moment as the shades of night fell over them like a purple veil, his feelings were all of exultation and not of sadness. He remembered, indeed, that he was alone on this island, surrounded by savages, of whose language he was ignorant and of whose real disposition he could not, from his brief acquaintance with them, possess much knowledge. He had taken care, however, to provide himself with arms, and he knew that the Indians ascribed supernatural power to everything appertaining to the white men. He was quick to note the awe with which they had regarded the brilliant colors of the admiral's dress, and he had supplied himself from the wardrobe of his commander with such articles as he thought likely to be effective in displaying his own personal advantages, of which he was well aware, and he had garnered up every little string of beads and every pair of hawk's bells that he had been able to borrow, beg or steal, from the moment he had first conceived the idea of remaining with the Indians. He was, therefore, fairly well prepared for the enterprise he had undertaken. It was only necessary to work on the superstition and simplicity of the natives to have a free course.

"He decided not to show himself till the morning, but in the early dawn of the next day, when the savages were gathered for their first meal, he suddenly appeared among them, with the full effect of having descended from the sky. Their surprise was wholly joyous, and with shouts of '*Turey! Turey!*' they gathered around him, and Mendoza perceived by their use of this word, which, among them, meant something celestial or divine, that he was received as a god. That he had returned to them while his companions had chosen to depart seemed a special act of condescension, and to



show their appreciation of this favor they prostrated themselves before him and kissed the hem of his mantle.

“This was precisely the effect that Pedro had desired to produce, and he was not slow to avail himself of the great advantage it gave him. He at once assumed the position of the visible representative of their presiding deity, and from that moment his influence over these simple and amiable children of nature was supreme.

“Mendoza had no cause to fear that any search would be made for him by Columbus, but he had determined to run no risks and at once made known his intentions to seek for the concealed city and its ruler in the interior of the island. During the time that the admiral’s messengers had spent in this search, Pedro had seen enough of the country to feel sure that it became finer and richer the further it was explored; and it had been because of his selfish desire to have its wealth entirely to himself that he had persistently discouraged his companions, declaring to them, notwithstanding all the Indian guides protested to the contrary, that only disappointment and fatigue, with the probability of death under the tropic heat, lay before them if they persevered in the hopeless search. Now, however, he set forth, accompanied by several of the natives, and feeling confident of success in that same search, while he listened eagerly to their predictions that they would soon arrive at the kingdom of Ornofay.

“Ever since his arrival on the island, Pedro had especially noticed two young Indians of exceptional quickness and intelligence. They excelled in pantomime and learned words and phrases of Spanish so readily that very soon he could communicate easily with them, so that now he had no difficulty in making himself understood. These youths he took on his expedi-



tion to the interior, and they proved of signal value in the course of the journey and afterward.

“The Indians had, at first, described their chieftain’s city as being at a distance of four days’ walk, but, owing to the extreme heat in the middle of the day and the hilly character of the country as they advanced from the shore, Pedro found himself not yet at the end of his journey when the four days had lengthened into seven.

“But on the evening of that day they had come to a range of mountains beyond which, as his guides assured him, lay a valley, hemmed in by another range of mountains not yet visible. The Indians, who seemed superior to fatigue, were for pushing on at once; but Mendoza, wearied by a march such as he had never known before, and unwilling to admit that he was quite worn out lest he should peril his reputation as a celestial being, peremptorily decided to wait till morning, intimating to the Indians his desire to greet the sun before proceeding further. As their rude religious ideas embraced the god of day among their deities, they readily responded to this desire on the part of the celestial stranger, and all prostrated themselves before him, kissing the earth at his feet and transported with joy when he permitted them to press their lips on his hand.

“Fruits and flowers and many kinds of nuts grew everywhere in great abundance, and crystal streams of water were frequent. Besides this, the Indians had brought a supply of cassava bread—a thin cake, made from the pulp of the yucca root—and skins filled with the juice of a luscious grape which grew in the woods in such profusion that the trunks and branches of trees were often covered by its vines, from which hung great bunches of the purple fruit. Pedro fared well, and although he could not wholly banish anxiety in regard to his reception by Ornofay, who might be neither so



simple nor so hospitable as his present friends, he felt no serious alarm and calmly retired to rest. His Indians had prepared for him a couch made from the boughs of trees, covered with heaps of leaves and long grass, and strewn with the gorgeous blossoms of the amaryllis, and as the island was free from serpents and every kind of reptile, sleeping in the open air was as safe as it was pleasant.

“At the dawning of the day, when all the tropic sky was pale blush-rose, preparing for the deeper hues of sunrise, while the clear air palpitated in harmony with awaking nature, while the myriad flowers unclosed their blossoms, raising their radiant faces to the light and sending forth their perfume as incense to the morning, and while every tree and bush trembled with the music of birds that blended into one triumphant anthem of praise and joy, the Spanish adventurer awakened, thoroughly refreshed, and rising from his fragrant couch, hastened to prepare himself for the coming interview. He made a careful toilet, taking pains to make the most of his fine person and handsome face, and also to display to the utmost advantage the brilliant scarlet mantle stolen from the admiral's wardrobe, and as many bright-colored beads and jingling little hawks' bells as he could hang about his neck and arms and ankles. To his simple followers he was a most imposing figure, and while they prepared and served his breakfast, standing so as to form a circle round his sacred person, Pedro began to feel that he was rapidly becoming more than mortal.

“When they began the ascent of the mountains, Mendoza pointed to the highest peak, and signified that nothing would satisfy him but to descend into the city beyond from the greatest elevation; and as this was in accord with the Indian idea of his character as a



deity, it served to increase their awe and veneration. He went first ; and being a good climber, sure of foot and well-accustomed to the mountains of his native land, he made an excellent show of speed, which, to the excited imaginations of the Indians, was easily exaggerated into supernatural swiftness. Any one of these fleet, undressed, untrammelled savages could have beaten Pedro Mendoza in a race, but so penetrated were they with awe, verging on terror, that they lagged behind, exclaiming and gesticulating among themselves, unconsciously supplying him with the appearance of superhuman powers with which he desired to impress them.

“Long before any of the Indians had overtaken him, Pedro had reached the summit of the highest peak, and there a sight of grandeur and of glory burst on his view that for a moment caused his sordid heart to forget all else in beholding it. The sun was now well up in the sky, for it had been a steep and toilsome climb, and Mendoza was more than two thousand feet above the sea-level ; and on every side, for he stood on the highest peak of the island, he could see the shining waters of the Atlantic glittering in tints of mingled sapphire and silver, palpitating as if with life and seeming, in the dazzling rays of the sun, to undulate like a sea of quick-silver.

“Here and there he could discern dark spots breaking the glistening expanse ; and these he guessed to be islands. Some of them probably those he had already visited with Columbus and his followers, others those to which his late companions were now sailing ; but he felt no longing to rejoin them, no regret for having deserted them. Here he was a prince, a god, and, if he did but manage wisely, this beautiful island would soon



be all his own and its people his subjects and devoted slaves.

“At that thought he withdrew his gaze from the vast expanse which had for a moment fascinated him, and looked down toward the fertile and beautiful valley at the foot of the mountains, a great emerald set round with points of silver, turquoise, ruby, topaz and amethyst ; for in that glorious light the mountains took on all hues and colors.

“By this time the Indians had reached Mendoza, and by signs and eager ejaculations they told him that he now beheld the city of their chief and the home of Anacaona.

“At first Pedro could see nothing but the valley, and for a moment a sharp spasm of disappointment and also of fear shot through his heart, for he thought the Indians had deceived him, and that neither city nor inhabitants lay before him. He had not the keen sight of the natives, but presently he began to distinguish specks of white and moving figures. And then, in answer to the excited gestures of his companions, he began composedly to descend the mountain, while the Indians went on ahead to prepare for his reception.

“The further he descended the more plainly he could see this curious city. There were several hundred houses and a number of habitations like tents ; which, as he subsequently learned, were made of a species of strong cotton cloth stretched upon poles of bamboo cane. The houses were rude structures raised on foundations of logs, open on all sides, having roofs thatched with straw, leaves and grass, but within they were neat and clean and ornamented in many ways, showing a rude appreciation of artistic effect that gave token of a much higher civilization than anything met with so far in this new country.



“When Pedro reached the foot of the mountain, he found that the whole city, with the exception of the aged and the infants, had turned out to receive him. These natives did not flee at the sight of the white man, but they welcomed him reverently and as a messenger of the gods. Among the Indians to this day it is common to expect celestial visitants ; and Pedro soon understood that there was a tradition in this tribe of a messenger from Heaven, who was to arrive in the person of a young and lord-like man ; and, as his appearance exactly met their expectations, he was at once accepted as the visible deity for whom they had waited. Pedro had all the intellectual acumen necessary to avail himself of the advantages placed in his way by such superstitions.

“These natives were a handsome people, especially the women. Their language was the same as that spoken by the other natives, and it also resembled in a great degree that of the inhabitants of all the other islands ; but it sounded more musical because of the deep, clear voices of the speakers and the delicate modulation of their tones. They were clothed also and, although their costume was primitive, it was evident that the females took considerable pride in their drapery of bright-colored cotton cloth ; while every eye was fixed in admiration on Pedro’s scarlet mantle and fine velvet doublet and silk hose—also stolen from his commander’s wardrobe. But what attracted and riveted his attention was the profusion of gold ornaments worn as rings, as bracelets and as anklets by the large majority of Ornofay’s subjects, while the king himself and his daughter displayed all such ornaments and others even more magnificent, that Mendoza’s practical eye told him were jewels of price, with a lavish carelessness that



proved, more than words could have done, how freely these treasures abounded in this charmed spot.

“The *cacique* Ornofay wore a tunic of dark-red cotton cloth and a mantle of the same in white. His breast-plate and coronet were of gold, studded with precious stones. But the magnificence in attire and ornament displayed by his daughter Anacaona plainly showed that she was the person of most state and consequence on the island. This barbaric princess was of a beauty, grace and natural dignity that might have commanded admiration in any civilized court. Much taller than the Spanish women, with whom Pedro involuntarily compared her, greatly to her advantage, her form would have served the ancient Greek sculptors as a model for the ideal Venus; and she wore her white tunic and mantle with the ease and dignity of a Roman matron. All of these Indians were much lighter in color than any yet seen by the Spaniards, but Anacaona was fairer than any of the others. Her features were delicate and refined, her teeth of dazzling whiteness, and her large, dark eyes of a soft and melting luster. Her hair, which was straight and long and black, like that of the rest of her tribe, hung loose about her shoulders, and among its luxuriant tresses were wound strings of pearls and natural flowers. A golden coronet, studded with gems, much richer than that worn by Ornofay, crowned her head; and above the coronet, and valued far more by the wearer, was a tuft of brilliant and many-colored feathers.

“Near the Indian princess stood the two young Indians whom Mendoza had endeavored to prepare as interpreters, and as she came forward to welcome the Spaniard, they strove to render the meaning of her words according to their limited comprehension of the stranger’s language. Pedro responded with all the



grandiloquence of his native tongue, raising his arms toward heaven and seeming to embrace all the blue and cloudless sky in his reply.

“His Indians then translated, with all that their vividly impressed fancy could add ; and the princess devoutly crossed her arms upon her breast and bent her head before him, while her subjects knelt and touched their foreheads to the earth, in token of submission and reverence to the messenger of the gods.

“By a fortunate inspiration, Pedro was moved to lay his hand on the bowed head of the princess and to utter a benediction such as the priests of his own land would have bestowed ; whereupon Anacaona, with a radiant glance, led him to her father, and from that moment he was treated not only as an honored guest and celestial messenger but also as a son of the *cacique*.

“It was soon evident to Pedro that he had only to express such a wish to become indeed the son of Ornofay ; for Anacaona was as madly in love with him as his own little Juanita in far-off Spain—Juanita who had become no more than a figure in some half-forgotten dream, and the recollection of whom, in the infrequent moments when he thought of her, would not for an instant stand in the way of a marriage with this Indian girl. His one thought now was to rivet his power over this Indian tribe and become permanently their *guamiquina*—a word signifying ‘great chief over all.’ He speedily learned why Anacaona was regarded with special reverence and why she occupied in their regard a place even higher than that of her father, the *cacique* Ornofay. They believed her possessed of occult powers and revered her as an almost supernatural being. Pedro observed this with some alarm, for he perceived that this beautiful barbarian was of an intelligence that would have been remarkable even among



his own countrywomen ; and he suspected her 'supernatural gifts,' to be a pretense, assumed for the purpose of holding greater sway over her subjects. He reasoned that if she was shrewed enough for this, she would soon suspect and comprehend the extent of his own celestial claims.

"All the more reason, then, that their interests should be made one ; and he determined to avail himself of the advantages of Anacaona's evident preference for him.

"The 'Golden Flower,'—for that was the meaning of the Indian maiden's name in the language of her people—showed love's own quickness in learning the soft, melodious words of the Spanish tongue ; and as she never tired of listening to his voice, Pedro found no difficulty in his wooing. Even her name, when he learned its meaning, was fascinating ; and when she showed him a small, star-shaped flower, telling him that was the 'Anacaona,' he pressed it to his lips and declared that henceforth it should be as dear as any gift of the gods.

"'But why do you call it the flower of gold ?' asked Pedro, his gaze intently fixed on the pretty blossom, which was of the brightest crimson—a true blood-color. Though as he turned it about in his fingers, the sunlight, gleaming on its velvety leaves, seemed to strike color like orange flames from the heart of it.

"'Not for its color—for the meaning. My people call it golden flower,' answered the girl, in the broken phrases that Pedro always understood as well as she now felt the meaning of his glowing looks.

"And, pointing over the mountains, she explained, by eloquent pantomime when words failed, how the flower grew only where gold was found, and that she had been ever the first to find this rare flower, till the people had bestowed its name upon her.



“At these words, Pedro’s heart beat quick with joy.

“From the first he had been assured that gold was plentiful on this island, and that it existed in vast quantities among the mountains, and it had been a severe discipline for him to keep his avaricious desires under control till the right moment should arrive.

“Since he had come to the city of Ornofay, he had often spoken of gold ; but the Indians had always looked toward Anacaona, and he had supposed this to mean that they were not free to speak in her presence. But now he speedily guessed that it indicated some peculiar and special relation between her and the precious article he so coveted ; and while this was, to a certain extent, reassuring to Pedro, it was also alarming. If the Indian girl really believed him a supernatural being, she would deny him nothing, but if she suspected him of playing a part, how should he be able to influence her ? He had only to look in her eyes to answer his question ; and meeting her soft, adoring gaze, Pedro felt that she could be won and managed like other women.

“‘Shall we not search together for the golden flower ?’ he asked, with a smile that made the girl’s sensitive being thrill with joy ; ‘answer me, sweetheart.’

“‘Ah, yes, *mio querido*, and pluck the flower from the ground !’ And she showed him how, when she had wrenched the plant from its bed, she had found tiny lumps of the yellow metal clinging to its roots.

“The eyes of Mendoza glittered with a far from heavenly light, but Anacaona did not see it ; nor would she have understood the avaricious glow that now overspread his face. To her the gold was a wonderful thing, because she alone had ever found its precious flower ; and that was a gift bestowed on her by the gods—for some great purpose—as she had always



believed. That purpose was now revealed ; it was to enable her to lead their messenger to the places where gold could be found, that she and her people might build an altar to the sun-god, bright and beautiful as his own glorious face.

“ To-morrow, then, shall we hunt the flower of gold together ? ” asked Pedro, responding with enthusiasm to the innocent words which showed him a way to realize his wildest dreams.

“ ‘ Even as thou sayest, most beautiful, ’ answered the Indian girl ; and again she crossed her arms upon her breast and bowed her head, as she had done when they first met.

“ Pedro was tempted to take her in his arms and press his suit like any mortal wooer, but something he did not understand still held him back. He merely placed his hand on the bowed head and blessed her.

“ Notwithstanding the favor shown him by Anacaona and the certainty he felt of being able to win her for a wife, Mendoza had never yet put his feelings into any form of declaration.

“ He spoke, indeed, the language of love, and the Golden Flower responded, but he could never feel quite sure whether her evident adoration was the devotion of a worshiper to its deity, or the love of a woman for a man. And the more he learned to know Anacaona, and the better she learned to express herself in his language, the more he became puzzled. Sometimes she told him of visions that came to her and of voices that she heard—visions of angels with which the air seemed peopled, and strains of heavenly music that wrapt her whole being in delight ! And when she spoke of these things she seemed transfigured ; a light flashed from her eyes that caused her face to shine, and a star-like radiance gleamed above her brow.



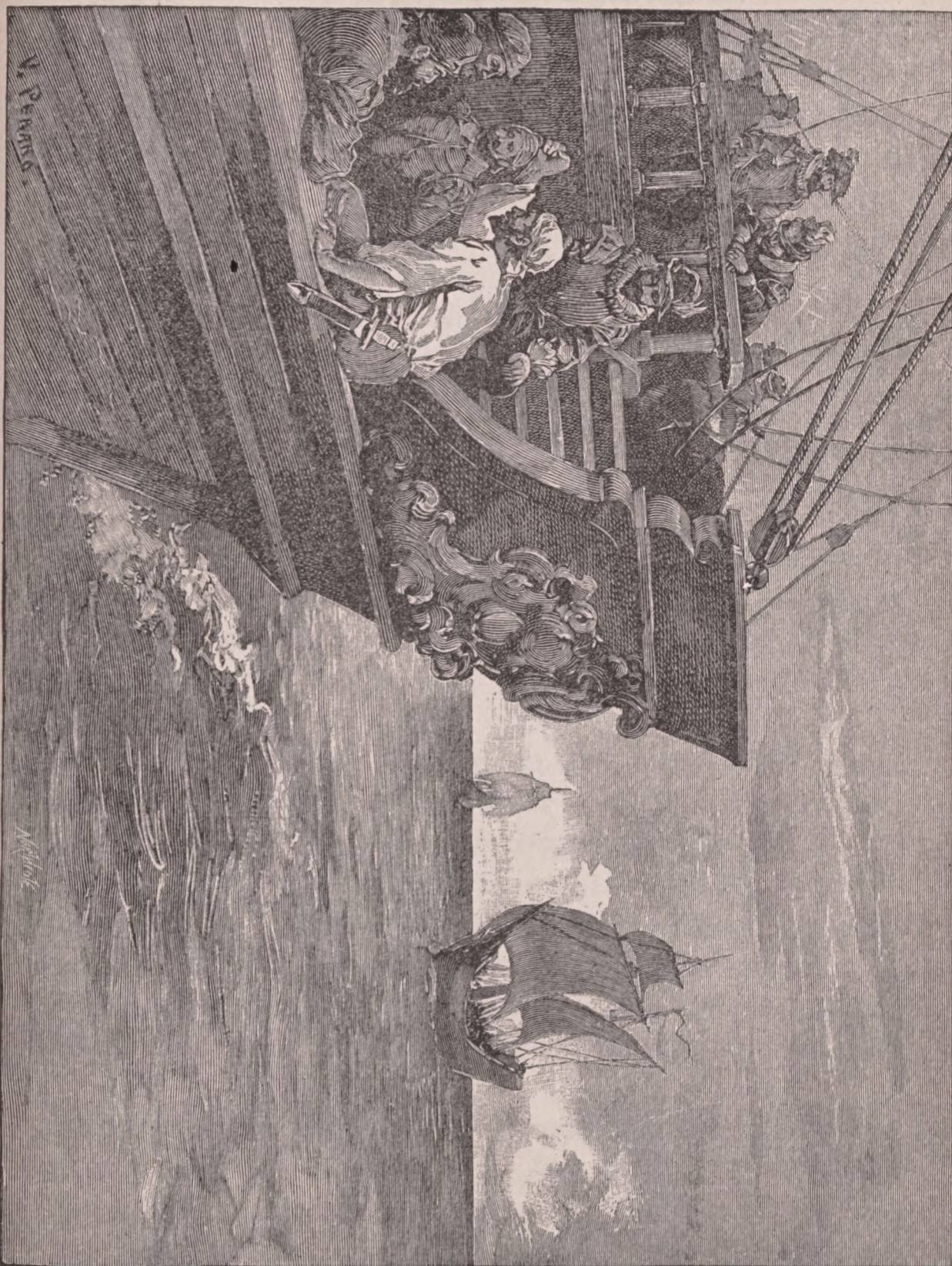
"Pedro felt a chill creep over him, and though he had never been a religious man, he furtively crossed himself and muttered a prayer to the Virgin. Such visions and voices as these described by the Golden Flower were well known in the church into which Mendoza had been baptized, and those to whom they came had been canonized as saints; but outside that church all such experiences were uncanny and could only occur to such as were in league with Satan. At first the Indian girl's visions and mystical tales had only startled Pedro by a depth of duplicity even greater than his own; but as the conviction grew on him that she was in earnest he became afraid of her—for he was a sailor and a Spaniard and therefore doubly superstitious; and though he was determined to fortify his power over this tribe of Indians by marrying their chief's daughter, he was often more repelled than attracted by her.

"The beautiful Anacaona was a being of a purer and loftier type than any with which Mendoza had yet been brought in contact, except during his brief association with Columbus; and the evil in his nature now recoiled from all that was fine and noble in hers, for the same reason that he had instinctively hated the admiral.

"Though incapable of comprehending these subtilties of feeling, Pedro recognized their existence by a frequent irritability and peevishness in the presence of the Golden Flower; but all such thoughts were now utterly cast out by the one strong passion of his life—the thirst for gold. He could think of nothing else, talk of nothing else; and when at last he parted from the Indian girl, it was with the promise to meet at the earliest dawn, to set out in search of the flower of gold.

"They had travelled many miles before the Spaniard discovered that they were followed—constantly, but always at a considerable distance; and by stealthy





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watchfulness, in which no Indian could excel him, he was able at length to satisfy himself of the identity of the spy.

“This was a stalwart young Indian, a relative of the *cacique*, who had considered himself, before the advent of Mendoza, a favored suitor for the hand of Anacaona. Pedro had often noted this man’s jealousy, without giving much thought to it; but now this espionage connected itself with his own fever for gold, and it infuriated him. He felt a murderous desire to fix a quarrel upon the intruding Indian that he might put him out of his way forever; and while he kept a keen watch he redoubled the ardor of his devotion toward the Indian girl. The day advanced; they had travelled many miles, and had met with many specimens of the golden flower; and once, on pulling the plant up by the root, Pedro had seen the glittering grains of gold clinging to it. Anacaona laughed and clapped her hands at his delight, and, pointing to all the rocky hills around, assured him that gold could be found there anywhere for the digging.

“Transported with joy, he caught her in his arms, her hands clung above his neck and their lips met in passionate kisses. The man forgot everything but his love for gold; the woman remembered only her love for him. It was not the beautiful Indian girl that Mendoza held in his arms, but an enchanting embodiment of all his avaricious dreams; but to the Golden Flower the god she had long worshiped was forevermore the man she adored.

“Pedro was entreating her to promise that she would at once, without a day’s delay, set men at work to dig the yellow treasure from the earth; and she was promising ‘Yes’ to everything, when they were rudely interrupted. The jealous Indian had reached their side and,



with a yell of rage, he precipitated himself upon Mendoza. At any time, the sailor, as strong and agile as his assailant, could have wrestled with him effectually, and, at first, he was content merely to protect himself. But when the Indian a second time flung himself on the Spaniard, he was received on the long, keen blade of a Toledo dagger, which pierced straight through his heart till the point appeared on the other side. As Pedro withdrew the dagger, the spy fell backward without a groan. The warm current of his life flowed out on the thirsty ground, a ghastly stream, and the white mantle of the Golden Flower was stained by it—the first blood of the native shed by the hand of the white man and the spring of a crimson river that has flowed for four centuries between the Indian and his paleface brother!

“All was over so quickly that Mendoza, willing and desirous as he had been to rid himself forever of the spying Indian, scarcely realized what he had done till a sharp cry from Golden Flower roused him to it.

“He turned toward her, but she buried her face in her hands and shrank from him in horror. He approached and tried to take her hands in his, but she thrust him from her and cried out :

“‘Thou art no messenger from *our* god! He is the giver of life, but thou dost take it from us! Away—away—thou evil one!’

“Mendoza saw, with dismay, that he had committed a terrible blunder. This simple and innocent people ascribed to their deity only beneficent attributes and worshiped in him the giver of life and all good things. Other deities they knew of to whose baleful influence they attributed death and all sorts of lesser calamities, but those gods were hated and reviled; and, while they were to be propitiated by gifts and occasionally by cruel sacrifices, they were never worshiped.



"Fear lent him both wit and eloquence. He flung himself at the feet of Anacaona, and, forgetting all claim to celestial powers, he wooed her as a man, with all the ardor of passion, with all the skill of one well versed in mortal love-making, and with all the earnestness of a criminal pleading for life. What she failed to comprehend of his speech Anacaona readily understood by his gestures and the burning pressure of his lips upon her hands. Tears flowed from her eyes, and her breast heaved with sobs. Seeing this, Pedro changed from entreaty to command. He forbade her to judge him as she would judge lesser beings. He justified himself by calling her attention to the fact that he had struck in self-defense—in defense of the deity from whom he came. The dead man had been guilty of sacrilege, and even the giver of life must withdraw the gift when it was used against himself.

"The Golden Flower listened and was convinced—more through her eyes than by her understanding; for never had the Spaniard appeared to her so wonderful, so irresistible; and if an element of fear was now mingled with her adoration, that only served to strengthen it. She was but a poor untutored savage, after all, and fear makes more slaves than love. She had found her master, and it was with the unreasoning tenacity of an animal that she loved him, while the new passion of fear served but to rivet her chains.

"She turned from the dead man, and, with drooping head, gave her hand to his murderer. Pedro clasped it closely, triumphantly, and they returned to the city.

"Ornofay was neither so shocked nor so terrified as his daughter. He had observed his jealous kinsman and had heard his threats, and he accepted Pedro's justification as a matter of course. Gods, even such as



they worshiped, were terrible in their anger ; therefore they must not be angered.

“ The marriage of Anacaona and Mendoza took place on the following day, with such pomp and rejoicings as had never till that hour been known on the island. Pedro was amazed at the graceful dancing of the Indians. Later, he understood that these dances were often of a serious and mystic character, though more frequently joyous ; but now he was content to admire them simply for their grace and charm. As they danced, the Indians chanted, with wonderful harmony of voice and movement, many songs of love ; and in this, as in all accomplishments, the Golden Flower excelled, for she had the poet's gift, and while she danced she improvised a steady stream of song, which they called *areytos*. Of these ballads Pedro could understand nothing, except that he was the hero of them and her passion for him the unceasing theme. The chief instrument of their music was called a *maguey*, a rude timbrel made of sea-shells and the bones of fishes ; and Mendoza now understood their frantic delight over the hawks' bells he had bestowed on them. These they called *turey*, and believed to contain angel voices. As many as possessed the bells had strung them, with beautiful shells, about their wrists, and as they now danced in wild and beautiful grace, the Spaniard found himself reminded of the castanets and dark-eyed maidens of his native land. Feasting succeeded the music and dancing, and then the wedded couple received gifts—last of all—oh, joy for Mendoza !—a calabash filled with glittering dust of gold !

“ Pedro's first year on the island passed happily enough, for every day was full of interest. His wife fulfilled her promise to set her people to gather gold for him, and although it was not found in such quanti-



ties as he had been led to expect, there was, by the end of the year, a heap of it that would have made him as rich as a grandee of Spain.

“With this thought came a longing to get back to his native land, where he hoped to purchase power and recognition almost as great as he now enjoyed. This intention to return to Spain, when he had garnered wealth enough to satisfy him, had been in the mind of Mendoza from the first ; and now that custom was destroying the awe and reverence of his Indian subjects, he felt how great a risk it must ever be for Jupiter to descend from Olympus.

“His love for the precious yellow stuff continued unabated, and there was no joy he could think of to equal the joy he felt in bathing his hands in the glittering dust, or holding between his palms the shining nuggets, which he could now count by the hundred. It sent a thrill of delight quivering along every nerve, and, for a time, he included Anacaona in this joy as being its chief source ; and she had shown him other treasures of their island, too. He possessed a collection of pearls, gathered from the river that flowed through the island, and a number of precious stones that might have ransomed the greatest king in Christendom.

“In boyhood, Pedro had been employed by a Jewish lapidary, and had thus acquired a knowledge of gems that served him well in the selection of the best. As his knowledge of the country and its resources increased, so his regard for the Golden Flower diminished, and he only waited an opportunity to desert both her and her subjects forever, taking with him his little daughter Dolores and his treasures of gold and gems. But the second year passed, and the third was drawing to a close before his preparations were completed ; and in all that time he saw little hope of ever being able to



effect his escape. He had made himself thoroughly acquainted with his domain, although it was a large one, and he had several times revisited the shores of that beautiful bay where the Spanish ships had anchored when Columbus first set foot on the island, and he now recalled that great man's plans for colonizing the New World, which, with his fellow-sailors, he had been wont to ridicule as the chimerical schemes of a crazy visionary.

"How eagerly he now looked forward to the possibility of such schemes being, at least, attempted !

"From the shore-natives he learned that mysterious ships had recently been seen ; and if Columbus or another had again found the shores of the New World, it was reasonable to expect that they would still come a third time, a fourth and continuously. He well knew the Spanish thirst for gold, and at times his hopes ran high. If he sometimes remembered his own conduct in deserting his commander, it did not trouble him. He had a well-planned story to explain it.

"But the third year passed and the fourth was growing old, and yet the longed-for sail had not been seen ; and Pedro began to feel that his stay on the island had become hateful captivity. The shore-natives had received his orders to watch day and night for the Spanish ships, and once their swiftest runners had come to him with the news that the great canoes of the pale-face *cacique*, with spread wings, had been seen again ; and Pedro hastened to the beach. But nothing was there—nothing but what seemed a sail disappearing in the distance. Many days and nights they watched the sea, but only the glory of its blue beauty rewarded them.

"Meantime, however, Pedro continued his preparations, but in secret and with fear as well as hope.



“Many of the Indians had never recovered from the feeling engendered in their minds by the murder of their brother; and although the body of the jealous man had been buried where it fell, and had been refused the customary rites of sepulture, because he had raised his hand against a celestial being, there were those among the malcontents who visited his grave as a sacred spot. Also, the Golden Flower had once said to Pedro that the spirit of her murdered kinsman had appeared to her and had warned her against the white man. All this alarmed Mendoza, and he longed to get away from these uncertain savages, who might kneel to him in adoration on one day, and burn him on the next, as the embodiment of all their evil gods. But, above all other creatures, he now feared his wife, the beautiful Golden Flower.

“Anacaona had greatly changed since her marriage with the Spaniard. More beautiful than ever and more devotedly, slavishly attached to him, she had grown jealous and fierce and, poisoned by fear, suspicious and deceitful. The luminous eyes, once radiant with happiness, now burned and glowed with angry fire. The voices that had seemed like angel music wafted from distant spheres now whispered dreadful thoughts and dark suspicions to her soul. The shadowy forms of light that had once peopled all the air about her now gave place to grisly and threatening figures, forever warning her against the man she adored—the husband whom she could not choose but love, though he might slay her. More than once Mendoza had seen her fall as one dead, her face and form rigid, her eyes wide open but staring upward; and then her tense lips would uncloze, and voices he never knew would issue from them, speaking in a language he could not understand.

“These trances, clairvoyant visions, cataleptic seiz-



ures, whatever the advanced science of to-day may prefer to call them, were common to this Indian princess, and they were regarded with awe and veneration by her people. But to Mendoza they were the cause of unutterable horror, and it was with profound and shuddering fear that he believed his Indian wife to be possessed of the devil.

“In one of these trances Anacaona had suddenly spoken in the voice of Juanita. She told him of their child, little Raphael, left to the mercy of strangers. She spoke of the little churchyard where her body was laid to rest. She forgave him for his perfidy and desertion, but she conjured him to live a better life. What did it mean? These were Juanita’s very tones. The description of the home where he had left her and of the little churchyard was perfect. Pedro felt his hair rise as if a cold breeze had blown through it, while icy beads of perspiration started up on his brow. He had never talked of these things to Anacaona. Had he spoken in his sleep, and was this a trick to deceive him? He bent over the rigid form and glared into the wide-open eyes. He caught her up in his arms and shook her. He pinched the neck and arms till his nails sunk into the flesh. Not a cry ; not the quiver of an eyelash. With a hoarse, muttered oath, full of rage and fear, the Spaniard turned and fled. He never dared to remember that scene, but in vain he tried to forget it ; and a frantic desire grew on him to return to Juanita and Raphael—but always with Dolores ! However or whenever he should make his escape, he determined, with all his evil strength of will, to carry his little daughter.

“Never was a more beautiful or more exquisite creature born into the world than the little Dolores. Paler in color than her mother, her skin had the rich olive tint of Spain, and her large eyes had that inten-



sity of color and star-like brilliance that have made the maidens of Madrid famed throughout the world. They had also the luminous radiance that had once thrown a light like a halo above the brow of Anacaona. Her abundant hair, as black as her mother's, had a wavy softness unknown to the Indian's, and on her lips and cheeks was the hue of the ripe pomegranate. She had all the beauty of both parents and more, as if the union of two races had combined to produce a third, distinct and original. From her father she had inherited the Mendoza birthmark, and the little, heart-shaped mole on her left temple was the color of bright amber, deepening under the stress of emotion till it looked like a brilliant topaz raised from the pale-olive skin. The mysterious psychic temperament inherited from her mother could already be seen in the dreamy look, that gave an expression of exaltation to the childish face, as if the spirit already saw through the coming centuries.

"The Indians adored the little Dolores. Her mother once more lived the happy innocence of girlhood in the child's radiant smile, and even Pedro Mendoza had a few sacred moments, when his little daughter seemed more precious than the yellow glitter of the only god he had ever worshipped. But, for her sake as well as his own, he now longed more than ever to get away from this island that had once seemed the entrance to Paradise. He had wild dreams of the future. His wealth would be fabulous, and with the blood of Spanish nobles, to which he lay claim, might gain him a recognition and a place among the princes—if he could but make his escape !

"It was in the year 1498 that word came to Mendoza that a Spanish ship lay at anchor less than a league from the shore, and had sent boats for a supply of water. The news was brought by his two favorite Indians,



who had remained entirely faithful to him, and who always continued to believe him a messenger from the skies. He had given them the fanciful but appropriate names of Fleetfoot and Scarlet Wings, in token of their swiftness ; and he would now have accompanied them, at their best speed, in order to greet his pale-face friends, had not Anacaona suddenly confronted him.

“ With a superb gesture of command she waved away all who were standing near, and then she spoke, in low, concentrated tones.

“ ‘ Traitor ! ’ she said. ‘ Wouldst thou leave me ? Ah, *mio amico* ! Pedro, beloved one, hast thou no heart ? Or, art thou indeed a god of evil, as many of my people say ? But, beware ! If I but raise my hand, there are those who will rend thee limb from limb and burn thy false heart to ashes ! ’

“ And Mendoza, cowering before her, felt the truth of this dreadful threat and knew in every fiber that his safety lay in the fact that he was the husband of Anacaona and the father of Dolores. It was also useless to deny his intention to quit the island, for he had before now seen that the Golden Flower possessed the power to read his thoughts and even to put them in the very words he had in his mind.

“ For a moment he stood overwhelmed, despair in his heart, and feeling that he could never now escape from this accursed island. Then he suddenly raised his head proudly and opened wide his arms, while a glow of well-simulated feeling lit up his eyes and flushed his face.

“ ‘ Come with me ! ’ he cried in his most persuasive tones. ‘ Thou shalt be my queen in a land where all men are gods, as I am, and all women queens, but none so beautiful as thyself ! A land that is truly that heaven you see in your dreams, and to which I can carry you



without dying—that heaven where our little Dolores may live forever, and where death, the terror and fear of this world, can never reach us !’

“With a cry of joy, Anacaona rushed into his arms and was clasped to his heart ; and, with devout thanksgiving, Pedro knew that, for the present at least, he was safe. He had observed with wonder and fear that the more Anacaona was under his influence the less her power became to read his thoughts or foresee his intentions. This psychological mystery, like everything else connected with his Indian wife, served only to increase his dread and horror of her ; but for the safety of his gold and his life, he was ready to swear a thousand oaths of love and fidelity, and so regain all his power over the Golden Flower. He quickly explained his purpose, and, having vowed her to secrecy, hurried to the shore to make arrangements for quitting the island.

“It was natural that Anacaona, as soon as she no longer felt the spell of his presence and the influence of his voice and touch, should begin to doubt him ; and while assuring her own heart that she believed and trusted him, she resolved that she would closely watch him. Pedro had built a store-room for his gold and gems in a cave at the foot of a mountain—a sacred spot where only he and his wife were permitted to go. But bolts and bars were unnecessary. The savages attached no value to gold or gems, and the fact that they were intended as offerings to *Turey* insured their safety.

“It was toward this cave that the Golden Flower turned her steps when the doubt of Pedro forced itself into her thoughts. She found the gold and precious stones undisturbed, and that sight gave her more certainty of her chief’s return than had all his oaths of love, sweet though they had been while she listened to



them. It was many long days before Pedro returned, but when he came he was even more loving than when they parted. Two Spaniards accompanied him, but when he told her these men were his brothers she smiled, for they were only common sailors ; and Pedro was not displeased by the quick glance of comparison she flashed from them to him. She was willing to believe they had come from the same divine world, but to say they were like him—oh— And her one word of scorn was very eloquent.

“Mendoza had made all arrangements for flight and had brought some bags of leather to hold his gold ; the precious stones, being easier of transportation, were to be concealed in the garments of little Dolores. For this purpose he had brought a ‘sailor’s housewife,’ containing needles, pins, strong thread and wax. This simple outfit of sewing materials was to the Golden Flower the most wonderful thing she had yet seen ; and had Pedro possessed it when he first landed on the island it would have been of priceless value to him. Anacaona was now stricken anew with admiration and awe of her great master while she watched him use, with all a sailor’s deftness, these marvelous little sewing implements.

“They were seated outside the cave, at a great distance from every one ; but they spoke only in the Indian language, for Pedro feared to betray too much to his Spanish friends who knew nothing of his gold and precious stones ; and there was great necessity for secrecy regarding his plans so far as Dolores and Anacaona were connected with them. When he told the mother that Dolores must go first, the gentle creature was terrified at the thought of parting, even for a day, from her child ; but when he explained the necessity for sending her ahead of them she became calmer ; and



Pedro unconsciously took the quickest way of reassuring her as to the safety of Dolores—for he was at that moment sewing up his most precious gems in the seams of a little dress the child was to wear. Wheresoever his treasures went there also was the heart of Pedro Mendoza, and he was sure to follow them.

“‘And Dolores will be happy?’ she asked.

“‘As the angels—among angels like herself,’ he answered, holding up the little dress with its skirt of bright colored silk.

“The Indian woman laughed and clapped her hands with wonder and delight, while Mendoza explained that there were children on the ship who would receive Dolores with love and honor.

“This was true, for the expedition had brought families to colonize the new country, and among them were a few children. It had also brought such articles as would be likely to please the natives, and among them were a few bright and attractive dresses for young children. It was one of these that Pedro had obtained, with the instantaneous thought that he could secure from discovery his precious gems by sewing them up in his child’s garments. As to their value, Anacaona only knew that her husband prized these precious stones as the light of his eyes; and even to her untutored taste they now looked wonderfully beautiful, for he had managed to cut and polish some of them, while others shone from nature’s polishing through countless ages.

“Mendoza had already tied up his gold in the leather bags, all of which were still secreted within the cave; but the gems lay outside on the great green leaves of the cocoa-palm, and as the sunlight streamed over them they flashed back in countless rays every color of the rainbow. There were pearls of exquisite luster; opals



in whose milky whiteness glowed flames of living fire ; emeralds greener than the tropic verdure all about them ; sapphires blue, clear and deep as the sky, and diamonds white and pure as prisoned light. Other gems that were of less value, but too fine to throw away ; and, though their commonness had helped to make their owner indifferent to them, it cost him many a muttered groan to leave any of them.

“When the Indian girl had first led Mendoza to the dry bed of a river near the foot of an extinct volcano, he had found there layers of the earth’s surface that had seemed at first all gems. Thousands, tens of thousands of years ago, that mountain’s molten fires had poured over the jagged rocks, and from that great alchemist’s laboratory in the center of the globe had been cast forth garnets, amethysts, tourmalines, like gravel on the sea-shore ; but Pedro soon learned to choose only the large stones and to dig deep for those of finer and rarer quality, and all the patience and perseverance of his nature had been given to the task. For a time, he would trust no hand save his own in this work ; but he was soon assured of the indifference of the Indians to these priceless gems, whose uncut, dull luster bore no comparison in their eyes to a few glittering, colored-glass beads. For a handful of the latter they would bring him all the gold and precious stones they could dig out of the earth. Ah, who so happy then as Pedro Mendoza ! He could not then have dreamed that he would yet count the hours till he could flee away from this enchanted island !

“Anacaona, who had been watching the nimble fingers of her master till she felt sure she could imitate them, seized a needle and soon proved herself an apt scholar. Folding a corner of her mantle, she was about to secrete one of the finest and largest of the white



stones, but Pedro quickly snatched it from her ; and pushing toward her a pile of inferior gems which he had reluctantly felt obliged to discard, he bade her sew these into her mantle and tunic.

“The Golden Flower smiled, for to her the amethysts and garnets seemed more beautiful than the gems chosen by her husband ; and as she sewed and pricked her fingers and occasionally cried out playfully or laughed like a gleeful child, she suddenly looked up to say :

“‘Ah, beloved, while thou wert away, I did find some of these dark, blood-colored stones thou lovest—larger and finer than any yet.’

“‘Rubies !’ exclaimed Pedro, with glittering eyes. He had but few of these rare and valuable stones, and not one that was extraordinary. And had he not boasted to Raphael that he would bring home rubies as red as the blood-red mark upon his brow ? A thrill shot through him at the recollection. He would yet see Raphael, who must be a fine boy by this time, and he would keep his promise, too. His breath came hard and fast as he repeated the word :

“‘Rubies ! Hast thou found rubies ?’

“‘Like these,’ answered the Golden Flower, pointing to the gem Mendoza was at that instant sewing into the hem of their child’s bodice.

“‘Where ?’

“‘Far up—there, at the top of the mountain,’ and she pointed away toward a great, broken peak in the distance—the dead mouth of a burned-out volcano, as the Spaniard had long believed it. ‘Something led me there when thou wentest away. It is high, and I could see afar off ; and once when I stumbled and nearly fell, I found at my feet two great stones, like these, but large like the egg of the sea-bird.’



“O blessed Star-Flower ! What a treasure thou art !”

“Anacaona became radiant with joy. Star-Flower had ever been Mendoza's most tender name for her, and used so rarely that it was more precious than any word of love that he could speak to her.

“Where is it, my star ? Didst thou say two of them—two, like the sea-bird's egg ? Where are they, sweet treasure ?”

“On the mountain, dearest. I would not rob thee of the joy of finding them.”

“Pedro's countenance was so quickly overcast that the Golden Flower would have trembled to see it ; but she had turned her gaze toward the mountain while she spoke. He had the strongest reasons not to anger her or in any way awaken her suspicions. So he cleared his brow ; but when he spoke, his voice was tremulous with the vehemence he was obliged to subdue.

“I would thou hadst brought them, my Golden Flower.”

“They are safe,” she answered gravely. ‘The mountain seemed to heave and shake, and loud bellowings and smoke came from its mouth. Perhaps I feared to take them. For hast thou not said all these stones come from it, and those big, red stones might have been its very heart.’

“Pedro could have cursed this new fancy of the poetic Indian woman, but he knew it was more than ever needful to conceal such feelings. He only said :

“When wilt thou lead me there, sweetheart ?”

“On the night we leave this place,” was the laconic answer, followed by sullen silence that, to the traitorous Spaniard, seemed ominous.

“Anacaona had so thoroughly learned the Spanish language, and could so freely express her thoughts with all the fervor of a passionate and enthusiastic nature,



that any lapse into the laconic style of her people alarmed him. Did she suspect him? Had that supernatural faculty of reading his thoughts and foreseeing his acts come upon her? Mendoza at once set himself to win her every thought from the future to the immediate present; and he succeeded so well that she felt him to be more her lover than he had ever been since that fatal day when he had shed the blood of her kinsman.

“Late on the following night, the two young Indians, accompanied by the Spanish sailors, stole away, under cover of the darkness, with Dolores. In parting from her child, Anacaona had found the need of all her fortitude combined with the stoicism of her Indian blood. The little creature clung about her mother as if aware, by some strong instinct, that she might not see her again; but she pushed her father roughly away. She had never loved Mendoza. Then, with sudden, touching resolution, she drew up her childish figure, turned her face to the sea and walked quickly away, followed by the companions of her flight.

“The anguish of this parting, temporary though she believed it, was heightened to the Indian mother by the thought of her own danger and Pedro’s if her people should discover her contemplated desertion of them, and she spent the rest of the night in trying to invent an explanation for the absence of Dolores. But, before morning, something had happened to make her task easy, for the panic-stricken Indians could think of nothing else. The whole island was shaken from east to west; not violently, but with a gentle, undulatory motion, as if it rocked like a ship on the bosom of the sea. This was succeeded by a stillness in which the bending grass and the leaves on the trees listened, the very air was hushed, and while a long, deep sigh seemed



caused cold chills to shake him like an ague. She had been overtaken by the mysterious trance ; and, although he feared to look on her, he was safe from her at least for the present. But how long would it hold her ? Dare he leave her so ? Would it not be far safer to—

“ His hand sought his dagger and drew it forth.

“ ‘ The dead alone never return.’

“ That was the thought in his mind ; that thought, in those same words, became the motto of Robespierre three centuries later ; but that only proves how universal is the sentiment.

“ No fiend of the French Revolution ever looked more devilish than Mendoza looked then, as he stood feeling the edge of his dagger, and looking down upon the rigid face of his Indian wife.

“ ‘ Pedro !’ she said ; but the voice was Juanita’s, ‘ thou hast broken my heart ! Thou hast killed me ! Must she die, too ?’

“ With a scream of rage that was broken by superstitious fear, the man staggered back ; but a mocking laugh seemed borne past him on the air. He raised the dagger and held it poised above the heart of the unconscious woman.

“ ‘ The dead return not ; *only* the dead never return to plague us,’ he muttered. ‘ Fiend ! Demon ! Possessed one ! Die ! Die !’ And the dagger descended through the poor, loving, faithful heart, whose only sin had been to love this monster, who had to her appeared divine.

“ Again and again, as if he thirsted to slay a hundred lives, the miscreant stabbed her, while the crimson current flowed out till it reached his feet. Assured then that she was dead past all doubt, he wiped the dagger on her mantle, returned it to his belt and sped onward



up the mountain, nor paused for breath till he had reached the spot he sought.

He did not find the rubies on the instant, but he knew that he should find them. The daylight was quite gone now, and at this altitude the air seemed to have a light of its own. It was a glorious tropical summer night, and perhaps on these mountain-tops it was never dark. Anyway, he knew he should find the rubies. He was down on his hands and knees, feeling about for them, digging in the ground for them. Ah, yes, he would have them soon !

“ What was that ?

“ Something shook him and flung him from the place just as his hand had touched them. He rose and staggering wildly wondered why he could not stand—why the whole place seemed shaking and trembling.

“ With an oath, he rushed toward the spot where, as he knew, the rubies were waiting for him.

“ Ah ! What was that flaming, luminous cloud that rose in front of him, causing his blood to curdle and his teeth to chatter, while his eyes seemed set and starting from their sockets with nameless horror ? The misty whiteness of that cloud took the form and outline of Anacaona's white-draped figure, while its flaming brightness gathered into one spot from which looked out the luminous brow and glowing eyes of his murdered wife. The shriek of a madman burst from Mendoza's lips ; then crying out : ‘ Ghost ! Devil ! Woman ! I care not what thou art ! Thou canst not frighten me ! The dead do not return and the rubies are mine ! ’ he rushed forward and flung himself into the flaming cloud, that now rose higher, broader, hissing with fury and hurling forth stones, fire, steam and ashes through the air. There was a deep, rumbling noise, a hideous roar as of a world crashing asunder ; the mountain



yawned wide in its terrible awakening, and down through its open jaws sank Pedro Mendoza, swallowed up in darkness black and horrible as his own miscreant heart?"

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## CHAPTER XIII.

### POLLY'S ENGAGEMENT.

During the reading of the first pages of the manuscript, Clarence speedily reached the conclusion that he was to be a martyr for the next two hours or thereabouts, and he determined to make the best of his position by studying the face of Dolores ; but from the moment when she reached the name of Pedro Mendoza and, further on, the description of the Mendoza birth-mark, his attention was powerfully arrested and held till the last tragic word of the story. He was neither blessed or cursed with the great faculty of imagination, but even his prosaic mind could not fail to see the threads of destiny by which the living descendants of the traitorous Spaniard and his two unhappy wives were bound forever to the victims of that awful tragedy of the rekindled volcano ; to the one through crime and the blackest butchery, and to the other by the still more awful tie of injustice and deathless grief reaching out appealing hands for succor even beyond the grave. To him, even more than to Dolores, the story had peculiar significance ; for by its light he could now understand all that had been mysterious and inexplicable in the cryptograph. And he felt assured that Dolores was ignorant even of the existence of that mysterious document. Had she known of the secret



hiding-place in the miniature, she would never have allowed it to go out of her possession.

In her candid face, that was incapable of serving as the mask for duplicity, he saw not the faintest trace of any knowledge of the cryptograph, but the reading of the old story of her race, familiar though it had been to her for years, had affected her powerfully ; and when she raised her eyes at the concluding word and fixed their gaze on Clarence Stanley, there was in their expression a searching intensity that thrilled him as he had never yet been thrilled by the look of any woman. Dolores was not aware of this look, but in her mind was a dim, unformed desire to warn this man, whose happiness was so dear to Polly Hamilton, of a danger that might at some time overtake him with the inevitable retribution of eternal justice, as it had overtaken his prototype ; and she would have been shocked and horrified could she have known the interpretation, so flattering to his own wishes, that Stanley chose to put on that look from her deep, dark luminous eyes.

As for Polly Hamilton, although she declared that the Mendoza Legend was just as interesting as a printed story, her mind had been wholly given up to the happy thought that she was now the betrothed wife of the man she loved, and that blissful idea colored everything she heard and saw with its own rosy glow.

“ Well, he was not a pleasant person, that ancestor of yours, Clarence,” she said. And as Stanley turned toward her she met the triumphant fire of his glance, and naturally enough read in it the ardor of his love for herself—and she colored deeply with answering love and happiness.

The blush recalled to Stanley what he had already forgotten ; and he thought with visible impatience :

“ What a fool I have been to entangle myself, worse



than I already was, with Polly Hamilton. I can win this beautiful Dolores—women are all alike ; and with her and the Mendoza treasure I shall be a second Monte Cristo.”

But to Polly it seemed as if her last words had unwittingly offended her lover ; and she hastened to add :

“But it is so long ago, Clarence, that it doesn't matter. Fancy being able to trace one's ancestry back for four hundred years ! Although that is nothing for you, for I suppose the Windermere ancestry is still older.”

“That goes back to the Norman Conquest, of course—but then the Mendozas were centuries old in noble descent before Columbus was born. If that is anything to be congratulated on, the family on both sides is extremely ancient.”

“Well, I don't know that it is,” said republican Mary Hamilton. “One must have had many queer ancestors in eight or ten centuries. And if we inherit mental peculiarities, as we do physical characteristics, it is no wonder that you and Rita should be unlike other people.”

“Am I so unlike other people, Polly ? In what way ?”

“Just in being handsomer and more delightful than any other man in the world !” exclaimed Polly, for the moment forgetting that they were not alone.

But this open admiration, coupled with a manner of having entire possession of him, did not suit Clarence Stanley at all. And he shrugged his shoulders with a disdainful coolness that caused the frank and outspoken girl a feeling of keen chagrin.

“I have shocked him !” she thought. “Oh, dear, if he should think me forward or unwomanly—what shall I do ? I forgot—”

She turned in confusion toward Dolores.



"Why don't you ask me in what way you are unlike other people, Rita?" she said hurriedly.

"Because I know what you would say," said Dolores, gently. "Your loving heart sees only goodness and grace and beauty in all your friends, and you are frank enough to tell them so, even to their faces—I know you of old, dear."

Mary Hamilton thanked her with a quick glance of gratitude.

"Of course, I would have flattered you in just the same way that I did Mr. Stanley;" and she looked toward him with a comic emphasis on his name. "But besides being lovelier and sweeter than any other woman in the world, Rita, you seem to have inherited other peculiarities from that Indian princess or, perhaps, from the little Dolores whose name you bear."

"Yes, I have," answered Dolores, promptly. "I have always felt as if that girl—the child grown to womanhood—had hovered about me in spirit as a guardian-angel."

"What a pretty idea!" said Polly. "I am glad you put it that way. I was half prepared to have you inform us that you were the re-incarnation of the first Dolores Mendoza."

"I have no such unlikely beliefs," said Dolores, gravely.

"But I don't know why I may not be a reproduction of that Dolores, a true descendant, designed by fate to work out the just vengeance of wrong and treachery."

"Oh, dearest Rita," exclaimed Polly, laughing outright, "don't be too serious about it. According to that story, your Indian-princess ancestor was a kind of possessed woman, like the spirit-mediums of the present day. Did you ever see a medium? There was a friend of mamma's in San Francisco who was half crazy on the spiritualistic philosophy, as she called it, and she was



forever consulting the mediums and the spirits. There are more mediums to the square mile in San Francisco than in any other city in the Union, and every one of them has an Indian 'control.' I never heard of an Indian who hadn't an Indian control, and I used to wonder greatly at the number of controlling Indian spirits. But now I see a reason for it. The mediums are all descended from that extraordinary princess. In the course of four hundred years she must have had many thousands of descendants, and she has provided each one of them with an Indian control."

Dolores, who had been listening with a face of great seriousness, suddenly burst into irrepressible laughter.

"I think you are perfectly ridiculous, Maruja," she said, in a provoked tone. "I don't know anything about spirit-mediums. I have heard mamma speak of them, but she had a horror of their wicked lies and cruel fraud. But I can see no reason in the world why the spirits of those who have loved us in this life should not be near us to comfort us after death has parted them from us, when our thoughts are lifted high enough to reach them. I don't like jesting about such subjects; they are too sacred for laughter. Any way, I am not a medium and I have no Indian control."

"But you have, Lorita. Either the princess or her daughter has taken you in charge. I would say the beautiful Anacaona—the Golden Flower. Such a splendid name for a control, and very taking."

"You are incorrigible!" exclaimed Dolores, as she gathered up the loose leaves of her manuscript and folded them together. "I shall be sorry I read my little story if you are going to turn it into ridicule."

"Polly is a wicked girl," said Stanley, quickly. "But I am grateful to you beyond words, Cousin Dolores. All we Mendozas have heard something, now



and then, of our singular ancestry, but I have never so thoroughly understood it as I do now. Evidently, your father knew more of it than the rest of us, and perhaps he could have carried it even further than he has done in that story. Of course, it is understood that the little Dolores, with all those wonderful gems sewed up in the seams of her garments, was carried away from the island before the upheaval of the earthquake and the destruction of the Indian city in the volcanic eruption."

"Oh, yes," answered Dolores, carelessly. "No doubt she reached the Spanish ships in safety, and, having been taken to Spain, it is possible that the sailors hunted up Pedro's other child, Raphael. The brother and sister must have grown to manhood and womanhood, and among their descendants there may be many still living besides us two; but my father was the true heir to the great Mendoza treasure, for he alone possessed the secret to it, which he inherited from his father."

Stanley almost betrayed himself by his quickly suppressed exclamation at these unexpected words. But Dolores, who had not been looking at him, was quite unconscious of the effect she had produced; and, having now carefully tied up the roll of manuscript, she rose to leave the room.

"But this treasure! What was it? Where is it? Do you know anything of it?" exclaimed Stanley, with an eagerness he vainly strove to disguise.

"I know nothing of it," said Dolores, indifferently, "except that it is hidden somewhere in the Santiago Canyon, where my father died and where he now lies buried. It is a very great treasure, I have heard mamma say, of fabulous value in gold and precious stones, among them some of these very gems that Pedro and the Gold Flower sewed into the garments of my



little namesake. But I take no interest in it. My father lost his life in quest of it and died broken-hearted without finding it. My mother lies in a nameless grave, bestowed partly by charity, and I think I should be willing to give up my claim to it for the privilege of burying her ashes in the grave of the husband who adored her. But," she added mockingly, "this Columbian year is to be an eventful one for Americans. Who knows but it may also reveal the hiding-place of the Mendoza treasure. It was prophesied, long ago, that it would be unearthed at the close of the four hundred years, and the name of the discoveror was given as Dolores Mendoza ; but in this great country there may be many of that name, although I know of only one."

She bowed slightly, with a smile on her lips but an inscrutable look in her eyes, and left the room, while Stanley gazed after her, his heart beating wildly and her words ringing, like strange music, in his ears.

"Clarence !" said the voice of Polly Hamilton close beside him, but in tones so low and timid the sound did not reach him. As Dolores left the room, Polly rose quickly and hurried toward her lover ; and when he did not turn to her, even in answer to that timid but impassioned utterance of his name, she went still closer to him, and laying her hand upon his arm, she said again : "Clarence !"

Stanley turned and said sharply :

"Ah ! Polly—is it you ?"

"Yes, dear. Are you angry with me ?"

"Angry ? For what ?" And then, with an effort, he brought his thoughts back to Polly Hamilton ; and, remembering, he understood her.

"Why should I be angry with you, Polly ?" he said with assumed gentleness.

. . . . .



"You seem annoyed that Rita should know about—about—"

"About what?" said Stanley, cruelly, seeing that she hesitated and did not know how to put her thought in words.

"About our engagement," said Polly, blushing furiously, and with a terrible sense of being forced to appear forward and almost indelicate, and yet with a feeling that she *must* understand this man, who seemed determined to trifle with her, even if it killed her with shame to force the truth from him.

"Oh—our engagement!" said Stanley, softly; and thinking as he said so: "Of course, she considers it an engagement. Why shouldn't she? And I dare not offend her, for papa Hamilton could be a rough customer if he chose. Besides, I cannot afford to throw over pretty Polly just yet."

All this passed through the mind of Clarence Stanley in the brief instant that served to show him Mary Hamilton's tremulous, quivering lips and tear-wet eyes imploringly raised to his; and, with an instantaneous change of manner, he caught her in his arms and drew her close to his heart.

"Darling Polly! Forgive me!" he exclaimed. "I was for the moment quite absent-minded and carried away by the thought of that extraordinary girl and the strange story she had just read to us. Of course, I am not angry. How could any one ever be angry with you, Polly? But, since you speak of it, perhaps it will be better to say nothing of our—our engagement—for the present, neither to Dolores nor to any one else. At least, until I have spoken to your father. Perhaps, when he knows what a shocking bad ancestry I have, he may not be willing to give his little girl into my keeping."



Mary laughed softly and rested her head on his shoulder.

“And you, Polly—don’t you feel afraid to trust yourself to the descendant of Pedro Mendoza? How if I should be the re-incarnation of that wicked traitor?”

“Clarence!” said Polly, in a voice sweet with indignant reproach.

“Well,” thought Clarence, “if other things fail, old Hamilton is worth I know not how many millions, and Polly is really a very charming little girl.”

He drew her closer within his arms, and, as he stooped over her, he kissed her several times, and didn’t even try to cheat himself into the belief that it was accidental, for there was now a settled purpose in his love-making.

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## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE UNEXPECTED HAPPENS.

During the half-hour that Clarence Stanley passed with Polly Hamilton, and while her hand lay clasped in his and her eyes and ears drank in his looks and words, he had followed out a course of reasoning somewhat as follows :

“So long as Polly is satisfied by my devotion, I can come and go as I please, which will give me time to study Dolores and to gain the power over her so essential to the success of my plans ; and when that is accomplished and it becomes necessary to break with Polly, the quarrel can be made to originate with her by rousing her jealousy toward her friend. Should it ever become necessary to return to Polly, it will be easy for



me to make my peace, and should other and more agreeable plans turn out satisfactorily, I have simply to keep away from her and refuse all overtures of a friendly character if such should be made."

As he returned to his hotel, Stanley felt that his day had been well spent ; and when he reached his room, he placed the cryptograph before him with his translation of it, and by the light of the story he had so recently heard, he felt that it was all clear to him.

"The Gold Flower," he thought—"that was the name of the princess, and this picture of the Indian woman represents her. Anacaona, with the Indian arrow through the word ; again the Flower of Gold. I see that Dolores is superstitious and full of spiritualistic fancies, though she doesn't know it. I must affect to sympathize and to believe in the guardian-spirit business and all the rest of it ; that will give me an influence over her. Then the mesmeric power ; I must not forget that. There is really something in it, and if I can but use it on her with the same effect as on old Van, my fortune is made and the girl is mine, to do with as I please. What a beauty she is ; and already she regards me in quite a different way from what she did at first. She knows nothing of men and little enough of women, least of all, of herself. Wrapt in poverty, sorrow and devotion to her mother, she is as inexperienced as a child ; her heart is as a sheet of white paper on which no man has yet traced the first letter of his name. Clarence, my friend, be it your pleasing pastime to place thereon your full image and superscription."

And with a triumphant smile, Stanley once more locked away the cryptograph and his interpretation of it. Then, as he caught up his hat, there came a quick knock on the door, which was immediately opened in



answer to his response, and Professor Henri Van Tassel entered.

He was so changed, and the change was so great an improvement, that Stanley did not at the first glance recognize him. He was still pale, but his thin face was no longer cadaverous, and though there was in his manner the same air as of submission to a master, it was a willing bondage, more than willing—almost joyous. His clothes, from his jaunty hat to the tips of his polished shoes, were new, and even the smile with which he greeted Stanley's surprise was bright and fresh.

"Halloa, old fellow! Is it really you? You have come in good time. I was just about to dine. Come on, and we will make a night of it." And together this strangely assorted couple set forth.

Early on the next morning, Polly Hamilton received by the hand of a messenger the following brief note:

"Polly, dearest, may I bring an old friend of mine to call on you this afternoon? He may not interest you, perhaps he may even bore you, but he is a poor fellow to whom fate has not been over kind, and I should be glad to put a little sunshine into his life if I might. But if you would rather not know him, don't be a bit shy about saying so.

"Ever yours, CLARENCE."

"The idea of asking leave to bring any friend of his here!" said Polly Hamilton to her mother, who was looking over her shoulder while she read Stanley's note. "But it is so nice of him, too, and I like it. I suppose it is a remnant of the Old World punctiliousness that makes him so particular, mamma. And he likes English phrases, too, I have noticed, or perhaps he uses them unawares." Polly suddenly lapsed into



"HIS HAND SOUGHT HIS DAGGER."—See Page 148.









silence, almost fearing she had said too much already, and wishing that Clarence hadn't asked her to be at all secret in regard to their engagement.

"But it will only be for a few days, anyway," she thought, consoling herself with that reflection and hastening to write a line of answer to Stanley, to send back by the messenger.

"It is so like Clarence to wish every one else to bask in the sunshine of his own happiness," she thought; "that is exactly how I feel myself; and the only objection to his friend is that I can't have Clarence so entirely to myself as if he were coming alone. But no matter. Lorita will engage his friend's attention, perhaps, and it will really amount to the same thing." And that was how it came to pass that when Mr Stanley, accompanied by Professor Henri Van Tassel, called on Miss Hamilton and the Señorita Mendoza, Dolores found herself acting the part of hostess to the stranger while Polly and Stanley sat by each other in a distant corner and were openly devoted to each other; at least Polly was a little more effusive than usual and so happy that she did not observe that Clarence only smiled and placidly accepted her evident preference for his society while he observed carefully the manner of Dolores and Van Tassel toward each other.

From the moment of first meeting this stranger Dolores felt herself penetrated with a feeling of pity and protection toward him. What Stanley had shrewdly said to himself in regard to her lack of experience and knowledge of mankind was singularly true. In her isolated and filially devoted life she had scarcely been aware of the world around her; and on the days when she had been engaged in the fashionable cloak-room, displaying handsome garments on her slender and elegant figure, her mind had lived in a world of its own



instead of observing and studying the people around her. But what Stanley was not capable of understanding about Dolores when he complacently put his comprehension of her into form was that she possessed a faculty of intuition worth the experience of a long life, by which she read as in a mirror the true character of those with whom she was brought into close relations. This intuition now told her that the character of Van Tassel was originally good—by nature he was true, simple, childlike ; but his mind was unevenly balanced, his nervous system was a wreck, and he was morally so unstrung that he held himself irresponsible for the circumstances of his life ; and, especially under the influence of a dose of opium, complacently regarded him as the innocent victim of a cruel destiny. From the instant when he met her first glance—a glance so kind, encouraging, almost maternal in its gentle protectiveness, Van Tassel felt that he had been born into a new world. There was between them some subtle bond of sympathy which neither could have explained, but Van Tassel knew in a moment that he had already seen the face of Dolores—yes, it was the same inspired and beautiful face that had recalled his spirit at the moment when, in Stanley's room, but a couple of nights before, it had so nearly left his body forever.

Stanley recalled those first words of Van Tassel when he was recovering from the mesmeric trance and, as he now furtively watched him, marveled if it could really be true that he had seen the face of Dolores, but at the same moment he smiled derisively and told himself it was all imagination—and then he turned to Polly and endeavored to give a little more attention to what she was saying. Try as he would, however, he could not keep his attention from wandering and his gaze from



returning to the other two at the further end of the room ; and at last he said abruptly :

“I must not tire my pretty cousin Dolores with too much of my friend Van Tassel, at least on a first visit. I think I will take him away now, Polly ; but if you will let me, I will return and dine with you this evening.”

“Do, Clarence—be sure to come. Mamma told me to ask you, but there is no need to hurry away now. Lorita does not seem in the least tired of your friend.”

But Stanley would not accept the implied invitation to remain ; and as soon as he was in the street with Van Tassel he hastened to say :

“Well, you seemed interested. Does the señorita strike you as being a genuine clairvoyant ?”

Van Tassel, whose exaltation of spirit—for it was nothing less—had already left him, answered in a tone of dejection :

“Señorita Mendoza can never be anything but genuine in every way. I think she is a clairvoyant, an unusual and extraordinary one ; but you will never be able to control so high and pure a spirit. If you will take my advice, you will not make the attempt.”

“Rubbish ! Of course I will make the attempt and succeed, too ; it isn't my way to fail. Already she is under my influence.”

“She feels your influence, she is not under it,” said Van Tassel, promptly.

“The same thing ; I'll soon have her under it.”

“You will find it is not the same thing at all,” said Van Tassel, persistently. “That girl has a soul like a deep, clear spring ; you may trouble it, as you may trouble pure water by throwing mud into it, but after a time the disturbance ceases, the mud sinks to the bottom, and the water is clear and pure as before.”

“Ah, thanks, so much for the comparison !” exclaimed



Stanley, in a flippant tone, while he thought : "Addle-headed fool ! He's nothing but a half-crazy dreamer, and I am probably wasting time trying to learn anything from him." But after some moments' silence he suddenly spoke again : "I say, Van, let us not quarrel about the señorita. You know by this time I don't give up easily ; I am bound to get control of that girl, and if you have any secrets in your confounded hanky-panky mesmeric business that you haven't told me yet, just yield them up. Now, you are going to help me with this girl in every way in your power, aren't you ?"

Van Tassel turned fiercely, like some timid animal at bay, and his eyes gleamed with the frantic fury of weakness grown desperate.

"No !" he said hoarsely. "No ! Not to save my soul from perdition, will I help you to do that girl a moment's injury !"

"I don't want to harm her, you fool !" exclaimed Stanley. For a moment he thought of brushing Van Tassel aside and out of his life forever ; but even as he looked at him, the professor began to tremble, the fierce light of defiance left his eyes, and he sighed feebly. "Let's say no more about it, Van," said Stanley, with a smile. "Come on over to the hotel ; I want to ask your help about something easier ; only about the cryptograph, so you needn't worry. I shall not speak of the señorita again."

Van Tassel sighed once more, but he could not refuse, even if he had wished to do so ; and the two walked on in silence till they were in the room of Clarence Stanley.

Van Tassel sank helplessly into a chair and looked up at his captor—for so he felt him to be—with the fascinated gaze of the bird under the eye of the rattlesnake. Stanley answered with a cruel smile, and then raising



his hands, made swift downward passes before his victim's face, and in a few moments Van Tassel's head lay back against the chair and he was unconscious.

"Fool!" muttered Stanley. "Taken in your own trap! Had you not defied me, I would not have used my power against you. From this time forth, refuse me nothing. Come here every day. When I need you, I will use you. When I need you not, I will send you away. In everything you are my slave. Bring me every book on mesmerism that you possess or know of. You shall have money for that and for everything I need, and for your own needs, also. Do you hear and understand?"

"I hear and understand."

"Do you obey?"

"I obey."

Stanley laughed aloud, and then, mindful of his last experiment on the professor, he began at once to make the upward passes necessary to release him from the trance. This time he had no trouble, and he saw how much easier it would be each time the subject was brought under the hypnotic influence. Van Tassel's face twitched and his eyelids quivered in the effort to unclose.

"Awake!" said Stanley. And at the sound of his voice the professor opened his eyes to their fullest extent and sat up, looking terrified.

"Oh, Clarence! What have you done?" he cried. "I had your promise that you would only use this power for good."

Stanley's laugh was almost pleasant, he was so entirely satisfied with himself.

"I keep my promise," he said. "And now go home, Van. I am done with you for to-day."

Van Tassel rose and, groping blindly for his hat, half



staggered toward the door. A cold dew of terror was on his face, he understood the full horror of his position so entirely as he asked his own shrinking soul to what crimes, what evils, what monstrous acts he was, perhaps, committed by the unbending will and cruel heart of the man beside him.

"Good-bye, Van," said Stanley, merrily.

It was Clarence Stanley's hand that opened the door, and, as the trembling, staggering man slouched out, the same hand closed the door after him, and Stanley said softly :

"Poor old Van ! But there must be something in this power more than I can understand, to make one man the helpless tool of another's will. I like it well ; and, next, I shall try it on the beautiful Dolores."

Stanley dined at the Hamilton's that evening, according to his promise ; and Polly thought he had never been so charming since she had first known him. Even to her own heart Dolores said that she was, perhaps, prejudiced ; he could not be the base and dangerous man that she felt him to be. If Mary, who was as pure and innocent as the dawn of a bright, new day, if her mother, who loved her, and had the knowledge of maturity and experience to help her, and if Mr. Hamilton, who had lived in close contact with the world—all chose to accept Stanley without doubt or question, who was she that she should set a mere feeling, a prejudice, against their united opinion ? She crushed down the intuition that still declared against him and gave herself up to the influence of those about her. But she knew that she was at war with herself.

Days passed and lengthened into weeks. Stanley spent the greater part of the time at the home of the Hamiltons, ostensibly with Mary, but quite as much with Dolores ; for she was constantly present ; and the even-



ings, after his return to his own room, and often far into the night, were given to the study of works on mesmerism and other branches of occult science with which the professor had furnished him. For a time Van Tassel had come to him every day, always bringing some new book ; and for a time this had greatly amused Stanley, as proving the mesmeric power in which he held his slave. But gradually this power waned—for reasons well understood by Van Tassel but not even suspected by Clarence Stanley. At last, the professor ceased to come, and, for a time, his master did not even observe this ; his entire being, every faculty of his mind, for good or evil, had become absorbed in the thought of Dolores Mendoza and the possibility that she might love him. For the first and last and only time in his life he was under the dominion of an absorbing passion for a woman, and, as yet, he did not know it. Nor did Mary Hamilton know it or even suspect it ; and this was not surprising, either, although, as she had once told Dolores, she was naturally jealous.

Stanley's love for Dolores had grown up so gradually under her eyes that not the least thought of its existence had yet come to her ; and the varying moods of Dolores, her excitement, her gayety, her dejection, succeeded often by almost frivolous hilarity ; her days of sadness and profound melancholy, interspersed by hours of merriment, sarcastic bitterness and playful sweetness—caused her the less surprise because she had no previous acquaintance with Dolores and could never fully know what was the normal condition of this unknown, mysterious but altogether charming and lovable stranger. Sometimes she thought about these things, but not often, for her time was almost wholly occupied since her "engagement," as she always called the relation existing between herself and Clarence



Stanley ; and when she did think seriously about Dolores, she always ended with a conclusion somewhat in these words :

“ Whatever she does or thinks or says, she is always lovable and sweet and good. Darling Rita ! She is the best, the dearest and the most beautiful creature in the whole world, and only to live in the same house with her is a joy and a blessing.”

True to the half-formed promise she had made to her lover, Polly had said nothing to her parents about her engagement to Stanley ; but she was perfectly well aware that both her father and mother regarded the situation in precisely the same way as she regarded it ; and already they had fallen into the habit of saying : “ When Polly and Clarence are married we will do ” so and so ; and after “ Polly’s marriage it will be time enough ” to arrange this or the other affair that might happen to be under discussion.

The first time this happened in Stanley’s presence he had started, guiltily, and turned with some appearance of constraint, at which Polly had blushed and laughed, and then shaken her pretty head. The next time such an allusion had been made Stanley had merely smiled, as “ the easiest way out of it,” he told himself ; and after that his marriage with Polly Hamilton, although not formally announced, became talked about as a matter of course. Mary Hamilton was very happy in her engagement, and her happiness flowed on all about her, and she had taken herself quite seriously to task for her neglect of Bertha Sefton. To remedy this she had first returned the latter’s call, and then, accompanied by Dolores, had made her former intimate friend a long visit. On this occasion Miss Gaye had been present, and notwithstanding the uncomplimentary opinion she



had expressed of the charming Olive, Polly Hamilton even included her in the warmth of her new feelings.

Nothing could have suited Olive Gaye better. She was at pains to respond to Polly's polite advances with all the tact and grace she possessed, and the result was that the four young girls very often exchanged visits, and soon fell into the custom of informal evenings together, which were nearly always spent at Polly's house, because it was there that Clarence Stanley made his call; and, as hostess, Miss Hamilton was constantly "at home."

"Fate and I walk together, hand in hand," Olive Gaye had once said, in a moment of supreme egotism; but now, as often before, there seemed to be some excuse for the remark. She had wished to meet Clarence Stanley, and she had then wished for opportunity to study him at her leisure and under the most favorable circumstances; and now the very cards she would have chosen seemed carefully selected and placed in her hand, while she had simply to play them out, one by one.

"I hope Miss Sefton and Olive Gaye are not coming to-night, Polly?" said Stanley, one evening, as he accompanied his *fiancée* from the dinner-table to the drawing-room. "I think I should like to have you to myself occasionally."

"Oh, Clarence!" exclaimed Polly, pleased by the sentiment, but fearing that she might have to disappoint it, "I am so sorry! I thought you liked them."

"I like Miss Sefton well enough. Her friend is one of the deep kind. I don't like that sort of woman."

"Strange, now," said Polly, "I felt like that myself the first time I met Olive; but I got over it long ago. She just adores you, Clarence; she is never done praising you, and," she added, naively, "I think that must



be why I have grown to like her so much. But she speaks of going to Newport soon, and then we won't see so much of her. They are coming in to-night, she and Bertha; and they are going to bring a friend with them, a Mrs. Helmholtz. Such a beautiful woman! Hark! That may be them now."

And as she spoke, there was the sound of the outer door opening and closing, and then a buzz of girlish voices, among which Stanley recognized that of Olive Gaye. He turned away impatiently and walked to the farther end of the room as Mary Hamilton advanced to meet her friends.

But Olive Gaye quickly followed him and, slipping her hand within his arm, drew him, an unwilling captive, back toward Mary, Bertha and a third—a tall, slender woman, whose face was turned from him, but the lines of whose graceful neck and shoulders smote him with recognition like an electric shock, even before she moved slowly round and bringing her face toward him, exclaimed sharply:

"Carlos! My Carlos!"

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## CHAPTER XV.

### THE LADY OF THE FAN.

Olive Gaye, whose hand still rested within Stanley's arm, had felt that electric thrill which had shot along his nerves, making him for a brief time almost rigid. His other arm moved convulsively, and his white hand went quickly toward his mouth, and for a second or two twisted his blonde mustache. Beyond that, there was



not the faintest sign of agitation in his pale face, not a tremor of the eyelid ; nothing but blank, questioning amazement in the look that met the beautiful, wild eyes of Celestine Helmholtz.

“ Oh, Carlos ! Carlos ! Do you not know me ? Am I so changed in a few short years, while you are not a day older—not a day, not an hour ! Just the same, and I love you the same, my Carlos, in spite of all ! They told me you were dead ! Did I not see your dead face and weep over it, and forgive all, all ! As I do now, when I find you alive after all these years ! Will you not speak to me ? ”

She sprang toward him and would have caught him in her arms, but Stanley stepped aside, drew his arm from Olive's clinging fingers and held up his hand, as it seemed, in the effort to defend himself, gently but resolutely, from the grasp of a mad woman.

“ Pardon me, madam,” he said, with dignity. “ It is easy to see that there is some mistake here ; and flattering as your words are, I must entirely disclaim all right to listen to them, as they are evidently meant for some other person.”

At this, Mary Hamilton recovered her voice ; and her senses, which had almost left her, between horror, fright and amazement, came back to her. She was as pale as ashes, and her voice trembled pitifully, but as she glanced at her lover and met his reassuring smile, she said with considerable self-possession :

“ You have made a strange mistake, Mrs. Helmholtz ; you are, perhaps, the victim of a singular resemblance ; we all know such things occur. This gentleman is the Honorable Clarence Stanley ; his name is not Carlos, and I am quite sure that you never saw him before this moment.”



“ ‘Clarence Stanley !’ ” repeated Mrs. Helmholtz ;  
“ ‘the Honorable Clarence Stanley !’ ”

She looked at him, bewildered, while her face twitched with emotion, as she tried to remember the night at the opera and the fragments of conversation she had then heard from Olive Gaye and Bertha Sefton. Yes, had she not tried afterward to cheat herself into the belief that it was a wonderful, a terrible resemblance ? For how could it be otherwise, when she had kissed the dead face of her own Carlos and held him, dead, to her frantic, maddened heart ? But, now that she beheld this living likeness of him, how could she believe him dead ? Could such resemblances exist ? Had he not rather come to life again, and was she not being imposed upon once more, cruelly, wickedly ? Oh, more cruelly and wickedly than ever before ? Her senses seemed leaving her. She felt that her mind could not bear these successive shocks ; and, clasping her head with both her hands, as if to steady her brain for a final effort, she fixed her eyes once more on Stanley’s face, as if she would read to the bottom of his soul. He looked back at her wonderingly, but with a mocking smile.

“ Tell me, sir,” she said, in a voice of touching entreaty, “ is it indeed true that you have never seen me before to-night ? ”

“ Never, so far as I can remember,” said Stanley, adding gallantly : “ And no one could forget you, madam, who had ever been happy enough to see you even once.”

Mrs. Helmholtz sighed deeply.

“ I must beg that you will all pardon me, then. I am so sorry to have made a scene, but monsieur’s so like— Ah !—so much like one who was very dear ! I cannot bear it ! Olive, make my excuses. Miss Hamilton will



forgive me. I must go home. I am so overcome—so ill !”

Polly, who saw that the emotion and suffering caused by this singular scene was only too real, and who was, indeed, greatly overcome herself, hastened to accept the hurried excuses of her guests, and in a few moments they were gone, and she was left alone with her lover—alone, as they had been only ten or fifteen minutes before, but staring at each other, as if all that had happened in the interval had been a vision, a dream, a nightmare !

When they had reached the street, Olive Gaye remembered that the carriage which had brought them to the Hamiltons had been ordered to return at least two hours later ; but she was equal to much more serious emergencies. And it was fortunate that she was so, for Mrs. Helmholtz was ill from agitation and Bertha Sefton was completely dazed and could only grumble helplessly.

“ Oh, do be quiet, Bertha !” said Olive at last. “ We are not children to be lost in the street even if we should have to walk home. Ah ! There is an empty carriage !”

And with quick decision she signaled the driver, and in two minutes they were all inside the vehicle.

“ I told the man to drive first to your house, Bertha,” explained Miss Gaye, “ that being the nearest ; and then I will take Mrs. Helmholtz home and stay with her a little while, till she recovers from the consequences of this unpleasant blunder.”

Mrs. Helmholtz, who was weeping silently, put out one hand and catching that of Olive Gaye pressed it gratefully ; and the latter returned the pressure. A few minutes more brought them in front of Bertha’s



home, and having seen her safe inside of it, Olive gave the address of Mrs. Helmholtz to the driver.

"And now, dear," she said to her companion, "do try and calm yourself, or your husband will never again intrust you to my charge."

"Oh, I don't care !" said Mrs. Helmholtz, pettishly. "Besides, he won't be home till midnight, and I *must* cry ; it rests me."

Olive made no reply, but she knew that her companion's tears were well-nigh exhausted ; and though her acquaintance with the beautiful Celestine could be counted by days only, she felt that she understood her sufficiently to be quite equal to all the management of her that would be necessary.

Passionate, and fierce in her passions as an angry child, but superficial and changeable, she was already regretting that she had not remained at Mary Hamilton's, in order that she might have learned something more of this man who was and yet was not her Carlos—the one being in the world who had ever made a lasting impression on her shallow nature.

"And yet, why should I weep?" she exclaimed presently. "If he is Carlos, he cares no more for me. He will not acknowledge me ; and if he is not Carlos, why, then he is dead long years ago, and I wept for him then ; and I weep for him always when I remember. But of what avail? It only spoils my eyes and gives me a red face. I will wait ! I will wait and see ! If it *is* Carlos— Well, perhaps I can compel him to remember !"

Olive Gaye answered nothing ; but she listened and thought, and every word sank into her memory.

The carriage rolled on rapidly, and Miss Gaye's thoughts, as she reviewed the events of the past few weeks, moved even more quickly, while the tears and



murmurs of Mrs. Helmholtz presently subsided entirely.

The acquaintance of Olive with the beautiful Lady of the Fan, as she had called her in her thoughts, was one of those incidents which seemed to justify the girl's reliance on fate. She had desired intensely to learn something of the stranger and, if possible, to know her personally ; and for several days after the night at the opera she had made inquiries in every direction, but had failed to trace the object of her thoughts, till, one evening, her uncle, in whose family she lived, said :

"An amusing thing happened to me to-day. A gentleman came into the office to ask me if I could tell him where he could get a fan mended. It was a beautiful affair of lace and mother-of-pearl, and I was amused by his anxiety about it. His excuse for coming to me was that he was a stranger in New York, and, as I am his banker, he came to me for advice. I gave it ; but my advice was that he should buy a new fan and throw the old one away. That, he said, was what he had wished to do ; but madame, his wife, would have no new fan ; nothing but the broken one, mended, would serve. And when I subsequently saw the lady, I didn't wonder that a man might be willing to do very silly things to please her. I never saw such a beauty !"

"Oh, uncle," exclaimed Olive, "I think I know about that fan ; and the lady is a beauty, as you say. Tell me all you know about them. I will call on the lady, if you know her address, and have her fan mended. There will be a poetic fitness about it, for Bertha Sefton and myself are responsible for the breaking of the fan." And Miss Gaye gave her uncle a brief but highly colored description of the incident at the opera.

"Well, yes, Olive, I suppose you may call on Mrs. Helmholtz—Von Helmholtz, the name really is, but it



makes it harder to say ; and he has a baronet's coronet or crown, or whatever it is called, engraved on his card. As a rule, I don't like that kind of foreigner ; but the man has first-rate letters, and I think he's a good fellow, except a little crazy about his wife and very jealous. I think you may call, however."

"Thanks, uncle ; I shall," said Olive. And before the next day she had made the acquaintance of Mrs. Helmholtz, and by the end of a week they were intimate friends. Like most of Olive Gaye's friendships the intimacy was all on one side ; she listened while the other talked. It did not take this shrewd young woman very long to fill the spaces in the conversation of Mrs. Helmholtz ; but she asked no direct question. In the first place, it was always possible that direct questions might not be answered ; and, besides, her passion for dramatic effect prompted her to "set the stage" in such a way that the actors could not help taking up the cues and making the proper effect. Her success in the scene just enacted at the house of Mary Hamilton delighted her.

"He is a cool hand," she thought, "the Honorable Clarence. If I had not felt the shock go through him, when he first saw Celestine, his effrontery would have imposed on me. What is the mystery between them ? But I need not ask. Celestine is wild to tell me all about it and I need only wait till we are alone in her room— Ah, here we are at the house. She must pay the carriage. I have forgotten my pocket-book. I have such a memory ! Ha ! Ha ! I always *do* forget my pocket-book."





## CHAPTER XVI.

### A TELL-TALE PHOTOGRAPH.

Mrs. Helmholtz amply justified Olive Gaye's anticipations, and by a judicious question occasionally and patient listening, she soon knew the mind of this superficial but fascinating young woman.

"It is seven years since I first met Carlos Mendoza," she said, "and I loved him from the hour I beheld him, as I shall love the memory of him to the last moment of my life. He loved me, too; I shall always believe that in spite of everything—though he deceived me about our marriage, but I believe he was deceived about that, too—I have good reason for thinking that Carlos thought the man who married us was really a priest; and if he had lived he would have made me his wife truly and lawfully. Of course, I had no one to fight for me, like you happy American girls with fathers and brothers, no one but a half-crazy adopted brother, who was not any relation to me at all. But he was good Henri, was—and no sister ever had a truer brother; he believed in Carlos, too, and just worshiped him. I don't know what has become of poor Henri Van Tassel; but if he is still alive, he would fight for my rights against Carlos or any man. But Carlos is dead, of course, although that Mr. Stanley is so like him that he has made me lose my wits almost; and even if he were still alive, it would be no use now, for I am married to



the Baron Von Helmholtz—and he is so jealous. If Carlos has come to life again he would kill us both. Tell me, *cherie* : Do you think it possible that in all the world two people should be so much alike as my Carlos and this Honorable Clarence ?”

“It is certainly singular and unusual,” said Olive, in a meditative manner ; “but, as Miss Hamilton said, ‘there have been such cases.’ If your Carlos is dead, and you say that you saw him dead, that seems to settle it.”

“Oh, *Dieu !* Yes, I saw him ! I kissed his cold lips and his golden hair and held his dear head against my heart !” exclaimed the excitable creature, and in a moment she was weeping frantically and wringing her hands.

Olive waited for this paroxysm to wear itself out, and then said calmly :

“Can you tell me how it happened ?”

“It was a quarrel over cards !” sobbed Mrs. Helmholtz. “In that part of the world it is mostly quarrels over cards. It was in a mining-town in California. Henri Van Tassel (my brother, I always called him ; I should have told you that I was a poor waif, picked up on the plains by another French-Canadian family, who were making their way from Montreal to California across the continent, more than twenty years ago)—well, Henri, Carlos and myself had just reached this mining-town, where we were going to give our show. It consisted of sleight-of-hand tricks, singing and dancing. I did the singing and dancing, of course ; and as I was beautiful—more beautiful than I am now, for I was only seventeen—we always had big houses and plenty of money. The entertainment was called ‘Professor Van Tassel’s Wonders of Magic ;’ but I was the real magic, and it was to see me dance that people



came. But Henri supposed they came to see his wonders of mesmerism and thought-reading and all such nonsense, because he was quite crazy on that subject and believed every word of it himself. After I left him, I guess he found out his mistake. It was at one of our shows that Carlos first saw me, and then he came every night. He was only a cow-boy, but his father had belonged to the real Spanish aristocracy ; his name was Mendoza, and there is a wonderful treasure belonging to the Mendoza family hidden somewhere in California. That was what attracted Carlos to our show. He had heard of the mesmerism and clairvoyance and all that stuff, and he thought if there was any truth in it he might find out something through me ; but he soon saw that I was a fraud in that way, though he declared I was a perfect witch to him and had the magic of beauty, which was the only magic any man ever wanted in a woman.

“ Ah, *mon Dieu !* How he made love to me, and how I loved him ! We had been married nearly a year, when we reached the mining-town on the night I am going to tell you of ; the show was over, and we had just raked in the dust—I mean the money—you see how it takes me back to those days ! And I was waiting for Carlos. I was waiting for him in anger, too, for I had learned by this time that the man who had married us was not a real priest, and I was going to compel Carlos to do me justice or else never see me again ; and he would have done it, too, for I had a bag of gold, and Mendoza loved the yellow dust more than he loved me or God or even himself. But he came no more—ah, never more ! It was Henri and two other men that came before daylight in the morning, and laid down before me the bleeding corpse of my Carlos, stabbed through the heart with his own dagger that was still in the wound—*grand Dieu !*



But I am nearly mad at the thought ! Could I have seen his murderer then, the same knife had killed him, too, but I never saw him ; none had seen him, and none had seen the quarrel but Henri ; only these three had been in the room, and Carlos had brought death on himself, for he had cheated at the cards, and if the whole camp had been there none would have interfered ; for to cheat at cards, that was a capital crime. Well, we fled away in the early dawn, and we could not even bury his body ; but I saw him dead, Olive. Ah, *cherie* ! Dead, dead, though I saw him no more, for the dagger had gone through his heart till you could have touched the point on the other side ! But I couldn't remember all that to-night, in a moment, when I seemed to see him face to face again, alive and well before me. The first time, that night at the opera, I forgot to think at all ; it was as if I had met his spirit in a dream. Then I began to remember ; and as he was so far away and I might be deceiving myself, I afterward persuaded myself it must have been a strange, a wonderful resemblance. And then I forgot once more and thought of my Carlos when I *did* think of him as dead, cold and ghastly, as I had seen him. To think of him so is very dreadful, therefore I try not to think of him at all. That is why, when I saw this Mr. Clarence Stanley, I was so overwhelmed—I forgot—and it seemed to me I saw once more my Carlos alive before me !”

Olive Gaye was an attentive listener, not only because of her interest in the story, but because of the light it shed on the narrator's character. There was a mixture of deep feeling and utter heartlessness in this fair specimen of humanity that proved her quite a new type of woman, at least to Olive.

“It must be a most remarkable resemblance,” she said, “I was at first inclined to agree with you, and I



think that your first husband had been for some reason masquerading under a new name. But having listened to your story, I have to conclude, as you do, that it must be a very extraordinary but not at all impossible resemblance. Now that you have told me the name of your Carlos, it is easy enough to understand. Mr. Stanley's family is related in some way to a Spanish family of Mendozas, and these family resemblances are often quite marvelous, and in the most distant cousins they are sometimes as great as between twin-brothers or sisters."

"Are they so?" asked Celestine, with the wondering simplicity of a child. "I never heard of it; but, of course, that would quite account for the whole mystery."

Olive regarded her for a moment with a positive feeling of envy; her ingenuousness was so perfect and apparently genuine.

"You ought to have remained on the stage," she thought. "It is no wonder you were a valuable feature in the professor's 'show.' " But aloud she said:

"And what became of your brother? Did he also mourn for the loss of this wonderful Carlos?"

"Oh, poor Henri? Yes! He was never the same again. I never knew what to make of him at all, but now he became more and more queer. Then he took to drink, and he used to be quite crazy with it, calling on me to forgive him, and saying he had brought ruin and shame on the little sister he loved—I never knew what he meant. But sometimes I thought he felt remorse because he couldn't save Carlos from the man who killed him. At last I couldn't stand it any longer, and I ran away. There was lots of money, and as it had been earned mostly through me of course I took it. But I knew Henri loved me like the best of brothers, and that he would have searched the whole world



through to find me if he thought I was alive. So I fixed things so he would believe I had killed myself rather than live without Carlos—and sometimes now I even wish I had.”

“Oh, don’t say so !” exclaimed Olive. “You are happy now, and Mr. Helmholtz is a devoted husband.”

“Yes—yes, too devoted,” said the baron’s wife, pettishly. “If only he wouldn’t be so jealous, but sometimes he fancies that Carlos isn’t dead at all, and he just all but drives me crazy. If he knew I had mistaken this Mr. Stanley for my first husband—*ah, Dieu !* His life wouldn’t be safe from him. I must never see that Honorable Clarence again—because you see I don’t care for him, and the Baron von Helmholtz *is* a good husband. No man has ever loved me so truly, and just the same from the moment I first met him. It was in London, and I was on the way to Paris. You see I knew I was half French, and I wanted to get to my mother’s country. Well, he took me there, and he married me before all the world—he has spent a fortune to educate me and make a lady of me—he would dress me in cloth-of-gold and cover me with diamonds—there is nothing he wouldn’t do to please me, and if you think, dearest Olive, that I am not grateful, then you don’t know me at all. But I do wish he wouldn’t plague me with his jealous fancies, and I think I had better never see that Honorable Clarence any more.”

“I quite think so, too,” said Olive, “and I’m sure Polly Hamilton will be entirely of the same opinion. You are too awfully handsome for any girl to like the idea of having you mistake her *fiancé* for a former husband. As to the Honorable Clarence himself, well, I don’t believe any man could see you often without falling in love with you, and that would be no end of trouble in this case. Oh, by the way, let me show you this



photograph." And she caught up a reticule which she had tossed into the nearest chair on entering the room. "I have only recently met Mr. Stanley himself, but I knew his family quite well when I was in England. I had a letter to-day from one of the family."

While she spoke, she had drawn from the reticule a large envelope, containing a letter and a photograph. The latter she suddenly placed directly before the eyes of Mrs. Helmholtz, who, although she had been prepared for the picture, could not restrain a slight cry of mingled surprise and delight.

"Oh, Carlos! My Carlos!" she exclaimed, snatching the photograph and pressing it to her lips. "And I have no picture of him! I dare not, for the baron would destroy it and kill me; but I must have a copy of this one! My beautiful Carlos! And yet—"

She held the picture from her and then again closer than before, and an expression of disappointment slowly settled on her lovely features.

"It is not Carlos," she said sadly. "No! Looking at it carefully, now I can see that it is not Carlos."

At these unexpected words, Olive could not have told whether she felt pleased or disappointed, and yet she had, unconsciously, hoped to hear something of the sort.

"In what does the difference consist?" she asked, taking the photograph and gazing intently at the pictured features. "The living face seemed to you so very like that of your husband."

"Yes; but I can see the difference more clearly in the picture. These are not the eyes of my Carlos. Ah, if you had ever seen them, you could not forget them! Poor Henri used to say they were the real magnetic eyes, and he often tried to persuade him to try to mesmerize. But Carlos had no faith in it at all and always



made sport of the whole thing. Then these eyebrows are not so heavy as those of Carlos ; and, though it is difficult to tell in a picture, the face seems more blond, more fair. Of course, Carlos was blond and his mother was an Englishwoman ; that is how he came by his yellow hair and mustache ; but there was always a touch of the Spaniard in his pale-olive skin. But this is not a good picture of Mr. Stanley."

"It is thought very excellent by his family, but it was taken a good many years ago, and he has lived in this country since he left England. That has changed him, and the sun, no doubt, has tanned his complexion. That would make him all the more like your Carlos and less like his picture."

"Ah, *he* is so like, so very, very like," sighed Mrs. Helmholtz, "but the photograph—no, it is not like at all. I never could mistake the photograph for Carlos, at least after the first glance."

Olive returned the picture to its envelope and the envelope to the reticule.

"I must go home, dear Celeste," she said, abruptly. "I have been so wrapt up in your story and so full of sympathy, that I quite forgot how the time was flying. Well, what a painful evening I have given you, when I thought only how pleased you would have been to meet Polly Hamilton. But you must send me home in your carriage, dear, it is quite too late for me to venture out alone."

"Certainly," and Celestine hastened to order the carriage ; and, as Olive was troubled about the lateness of the hour, she hurried away with the briefest parting words and embraces.

All the way home her thoughts were engaged about the photograph of the Honorable Clarence Stanley. It had arrived at the very moment she was leaving home



to call for Bertha and Mrs. Helmholtz ; and she had only taken time to tear open the envelope and to glance at the picture and a long, closely written letter from "dear old Toddlekins."

How slow that coachman drove ! How the horses seemed to crawl ! But, at last, the carriage stopped at her uncle's house, and she flew upstairs to her own room ; but before she took time to read the letter, she took the photograph from its covering and her eyes, looking like two points of light, fixed their gleaming gaze upon it.

"Yes," she breathed softly to herself, "I thought I saw writing on it ; it is very fine, and the ink so faded, I can scarcely read it ; but—ah, yes ! The magnifying-glass."

She snatched a reading-glass from her desk and held it over the fine and faintly traced words :

"Clarence Stanley, to his dear friend, Milicent Fairfax."

"And yet !" exclaimed Miss Gaye, her cheeks flushed with triumph, "I remember distinctly that the Honorable Clarence Stanley said to me, on that first occasion of our meeting each other, that he had never seen and did not know 'dear old Toddlekins.'"

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## CHAPTER XVII.

### AN INTERESTING LETTER.

For what seemed quite a long time, Miss Gaye continued to gaze upon the photograph held so tightly between her two small white hands. Then she locked



it carefully away in a drawer of her writing-desk, and she said to herself, with a smile :

“ I am inclined to think, with Celestine Helmholtz, that Mr. Stanley’s photograph does not do him justice. He is very much handsomer ; and however remarkable may have been the wonderful, magnetic eyes of her dear Carlos, they could not have excelled in that respect the wonderful, dark, magnetic eyes of our Honorable Clarence Stanley.”

She drew her letter from its envelope ; but interesting as she knew it would be and anxious as she was to know its contents, she held it for some moments unfolded, while her thoughts strayed away thousands of miles across the Atlantic, and she murmured with a smile :

“ Dear old Toddlekins !”

Miss Gaye’s correspondent was Miss Milicent Fairfax, “ the old-maid sister ” of Lady Appleby.

Milicent Fairfax was an old maid who had never been young ; she had not the past to look back upon. From her earliest recollections, she had felt old and looked old, and even at seven years of age she had heard herself called “ that little old maid.” It was the source of indescribable bitterness to her ; and when Clarence Stanley, a young collegian, had called on her sister Bess to deliver some slight message from his brother, Lord Appleby, and had either purposely or accidentally mistaken the old-maid sister for his brother’s pretty sweetheart, he had, in one moment and forever, won the heart of Miss Fairfax. She had never before really loved any one and never expected to give her heart a second time.

When Clarence Stanley had said good-bye forever to his native land, and had called to see Milicent and actually kissed her faded cheek, the joy and sorrow com-



bined of that parting moment had nearly killed her. But she didn't die. She lived that she might remember, during every moment of her future life, that this brilliant young man had really kissed her, and that she might, the first thing when she awoke in the morning and the last when her eyes closed at night, look at his face, that held for her the glory of the world. She had never seen him again ; she had almost ceased to hope that she ever might ; and when Olive Gaye came to Windermere House as a guest, Miss Fairfax gave to her a love as peculiar and as deep as she had flung at the feet of Clarence. It began by Olive Gaye treating the old maid with a playful freedom and lack of ceremony, such as is only observed toward young people ; and having thus won Milicent's heart, she followed up the conquest by listening to the story of her admiration for young Clarence Stanley and declaring his picture " just too handsome for anything." From that moment Miss Fairfax would have died for her ; and when she called her " Toddlekins," in playful allusion to her duck-like walk, declaring that Milicent was to call her " Nollikens " in return, as a synonym for " Olive," the old maid was ready to yield up her soul to follow where her heart had gone before.

" She loves Clarence," thought Olive, bringing her long reverie to a close. " She loves Clarence, and to the eye of love there is no disguise. But stop ! She loves me, too, and for me she will do anything—anything ! She would even throw dust in the eyes of love itself. Yes—if there should even be the disguise I suspect, and her eyes should penetrate it, I can yet manage that tough knot ! And now to read her letter :"



“WINDERMERE HOUSE,  
“HERTS, ENGLAND, May —, 1892.

“DEAREST NOLLIKENS: I send you the photograph; a copy would not be the same, besides which, I could not let it out of my possession to *any one but yourself* long enough to have it copied.

“Sending it is like passing it from my left hand to my right—I still feel that it is with me. And I am glad, dear, that you should have it for a while, because we are in such trouble here, and you may be the means of helping us. Lord Appleby is doomed—the doctor says his days are numbered—and the little heir must go, too. Who could have thought it? One short year ago, both of them the picture of health as they then looked? The mysterious malady that is killing them they inherit from Lord Appleby’s mother, the late countess. She had it from her mother, and so on, I don’t know how many generations back; and no physician has ever been able to understand the malady, or even to give it a name. They say it is no disease at all, but a curse. The countess came of a Spanish family named Mendoza, and an old ancestor centuries ago wronged some Indian princess in America. That Mendoza had two wives, a Spanish wife and an Indian wife, and both left descendants. It is said that the Indian woman left her curse on every Mendoza who didn’t lawfully marry one of her own descendants—and though that is a mere superstition—and I don’t believe a word of it—there is something peculiar about it, for as far as I can find out anything about it—and since I got your letter, dearest, I have taken pains to find out everything I could about the Countess of Windermere’s family, and it is certainly remarkable how many of them have died mysteriously from some unknown malady or else by accident or violence.

The case of poor Lord Appleby and his little boy



brings it home very close to us, and although I wouldn't let myself believe in this superstition I can't but think this malady that is killing Lord Appleby and the child very awful and mysterious. That brings me to the old earl. He is still as much in love with you, Nollie, as ever ! Ah, what a thousand pities he isn't his own son, and then you could marry him and be Countess of Windermere. He is in despair at the condition of his son and grandson—such despair that even the return of our Clarence (though his father has always hated him) would be welcomed. The earl, who married his wife from a bitter feeling of revenge because she had twice refused him, grew at last to hate her bitterly ; and this feeling was increased by the fact of her hopeless attachment to a cousin of her own, who was also the heir-at-law of the Windermere estates if the present earl should die childless. It appears to be a law of nature that men always hate the heir-at-law ; and in the case of the earl, *his* hate was increased by knowing the heir-at-law to be his rival, for whose sake he had been twice refused ; and when his second son was born, the image of his mother and bearing the fatal Mendoza birthmark on his temple, the old earl transferred his hate of the heir-at-law to his own son ; and poor Clarence thus became the pet and darling of his mother.

“From the time when Clarence left us until now no one has ever dared to name him to the earl ; but now, as I have already said, I think the earl would even welcome this detested son as an heir to Windermere. The original heir-at-law, his rival and the favored lover of the countess, is long since dead ; but he has left two children, one a son, Harold, and a daughter, Constance. The son is, of course, the present heir-at-law, and it was his sister to whom Clarence was engaged ; another reason for the old earl's hatred toward his younger son,



This young lady, Constance Moray, is a lovely girl, I believe, though I have never seen her. But I am ready to love any one who cared for Clarence and for whom he cared. Only the serious thing in this matter is that from the day when our Clarence left us till the present hour not one of us has ever received a line or word or message from our dearly loved boy. Of course, he would not have written to his father, and there was little sympathy between him and Lord Appleby; so there has never been any great cause of surprise that neither of them should have received any letters from him.

“ Though he knew very well that I would always be a member of the family wherever my sister was, it was hardly to be expected that he would have written to me. Not but what I hoped and prayed to get an occasional remembrance from him, but nothing has ever come. I would so gladly have kept him informed of all the news of the family; but I can't feel a bit surprised that he should have preferred to forget them all at once and forever as soon as the ocean had parted them. What I was not prepared for, however, was the fact I have just learned, and it is this: From the moment of parting with him till now Lady Constance Moray has not received line or message from her lover. Not even the sight of his handwriting on a newspaper wrapper has reached her. This is so unlike our Clarence, Nollie, darling, what can it mean? Does it foreshadow the fearful calamity I have never dared to think of. That calamity which now I cannot keep out of my thoughts. Is Clarence no longer living? Has the Indian woman's curse pursued him to the death, also? But, no! I am ashamed to let such superstitious fancies into my mind! For if there *is* truth in it, Clarence was the one to be safe, for he loved the



descendant of the Mendoza ; but, perhaps, not a descendant of the Indian woman ? Oh, what utter nonsense ! I would be as superstitious as any one if I allowed my mind to dwell on these follies. No, no, I will not, I dare not believe that any harm has come to my Clarence. Perhaps he did not really love Lady Constance ; there may not have been any engagement between them, but something there was, I know, for when Lord Harold came to make personal inquiries after Lord Appleby, I even plucked up courage to ask him boldly whether he or his sister had, in all these years, heard constant tidings of Clarence. And it was then, to my dismay and terror, that I learned all I have now told you of that dear boy's inexplicable and fearful silence. Oh, my Nollie, I can never bear it ! And though yours is such a large country, the world itself sometimes seems very small, and perhaps *you*, whom I love even more, if that could be, than Clarence, may be the means of finding him for me ! Learn his face by heart, dear one, and then, if you should meet him, you will recognize him for me. He may have cast aside his name ; that name he had no cause to love ; but you will study his face, my darling, and you will recognize him for my sake whenever you may meet him.

“ We are counting days, now, for our poor invalids ; a little while ago it was months, then weeks. Alas ! who knows how soon it may be hours instead of days. Lord Harold Moray has left us already. The old earl insulted him openly to his face, asking him if he had come for dead men's shoes before the feet they belonged to were cold ; and even my sister, Lady Appleby, seemed to think it was bad taste on the part of Lord Harold to come to Windermere House. But they all misunderstood him. He does not wish at all to inherit the earldom or the estates. It was to inquire about Clarence



that he came. His sister mourns our dear boy as dead, and it is plain to me that Lord Harold shares her belief. But he declares that if Lord Appleby dies, he will go in person to America and never return till he finds Clarence or proofs of his death. The Earl of Windermere sneers at this, but I believe in Lord Harold. He loves Clarence and he loves his sister Constance, and by my own heart I know him to be true. I am writing you a very long letter, dear Nollkens. Reward me by one as long or longer ; it will be all too short for me if it should be twice the length of mine. If the worst should come suddenly, I will let you know at once ; for who knows ? It may be yours to give the news to Clarence that, in face of all impossibilities, he is the future Earl of Windermere.

“ Ever your devoted

TODDLEKINS.”

Olive Gaye's eyes were glittering with excitement when she finished this letter, and she could have hugged her correspondent to her heart for the news she had sent. She even forgave the rambling style of Miss Fairfax, which would have made it difficult for any one less interested to follow the thread of her story. A smile of triumph lit up her sparkling face ; then, seating herself at her desk, she slowly read over her letter again, pausing from time to time to jot down special points, or else to follow out some line of thought suggested by phrases here and there.

“ The old earl still in love with me ! Ah, yes, Toddlekins ! It is easier for an old man to fall in love with a young girl than it is to fall out again. His last letter showed no such despair about Lord Appleby, no such anxiety for the return of Clarence. Perhaps he even dreams of another heir, one uncontaminated with the Mendoza taint, free from the curse of that ghostly, aveng-



ing Indian princess. But for me, I never did admire the old Sir Pitt Crawleys of London society, especially while there was a choice among their youthful heirs. But this Clarence Stanley? Ah, Toddlekens, he isn't a bit like *your* Clarence, and I prefer him as he is, much as he resembles Madame Celestine's Carlos!"

Olive paused suddenly in her reflections and in the broken phrases she had been writing on the paper before her, and she shivered slightly, as if with cold.

"If he is *not* Clarence," she thought, then Celestine was right; and if *my* Clarence is her Carlos, who was the dead man they brought home to her, and whose hand drove Carlos Mendoza's dagger through his heart?"

A livid pallor overspread Olive's keen bright face. She enjoyed dramatic effect; she had a taste for high-class melodrama, and the dark tragedies of the world in a strong sensational novel had a certain charm; but in life—in every-day life, mingled with her own existence—ah! It had suddenly come home to her, and she drew back appalled. Then catching up the paper she had been scribbling on, she tore it into shreds, lighted it at the gas, and watched it burn to ashes on the hearth before her.

"What nonsense!" she said. "It is all a dream, and ends in smoke! Anyway, I shall wait till I hear further news from Toddlekens."





## CHAPTER XVIII.

### THE DAGGER IS MADE READY.

Left alone by the sudden and tumultuous exit of her guests, Polly Hamilton stood for some moments in silence, gazing into the face of her lover, on which she seemed to see the vivid reflection of her own feelings.

"Oh, Clarence," she exclaimed at last, "what could that woman have meant? Do you think she is mad?"

"She certainly acted like it," was the answer.

Polly drew a long sigh of relief.

"She must be so. Nothing else would explain her conduct. Dear Clarence, I am so sorry you should have been annoyed, and through me, too. It is Bertha Sefton's fault or Olive Gaye's. But how could I imagine—"

"My dear girl!" said Stanley, tenderly, and taking her hand, which he pressed to his lips.

He was grateful enough for not being taken to task or called on for an explanation to be almost in love with Polly, and he was sincerely sorry when Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton now entered the room.

"Alone!" exclaimed Mr. Hamilton. "I was sure I heard voices. Where are your visitors, Polly?"

His daughter hurriedly explained and tried to make



light of the matter ; but, to her surprise, Mr. Hamilton was inclined to take it seriously.

"It must be a striking resemblance, indeed," he said, "when a woman mistakes a man for her own husband. Clarence, my dear fellow," he added, in a jesting manner, but with a very keen look at his prospective son-in-law, "we have always accepted you at your own valuation ; but, as you are now intending to become one of the family, I hope—I really do hope—you are quite sure of your own identity."

"Entirely, sir," replied Stanley, very stiffly.

"Papa !" exclaimed Polly, almost in tears.

"All right, Polly, my little girl," returned her father.

But, later on, he said to his wife that he meant to make more and very special inquiries about Polly's lover.

"I never could understand his extreme reluctance to talk of his English home."

"Nothing could be more natural," declared Mrs. Hamilton, "considering how he was treated there."

"Perhaps so," returned her husband ; "but I hear from an English correspondent of mine that Lord Appleby and his little son are mortally ill and may die any day, and in that case Clarence will be obliged to put aside his reluctance to speak of his English home."

"Then Polly may yet be Countess of Windermere !" exclaimed Mrs. Hamilton, forgetting everything else in the delight of that thought.

"Not a word on the subject at present," said Mr. Hamilton. "It is an entire secret."

Meantime Clarence's evening had not been pleasant, although Polly had tried to atone for her father's chilling words by the increased warmth of her own smiles ;



and, at an unusually early hour, Stanley bade them all good-night, and walked moodily towards his hotel.

His reflections were not agreeable, and the mood engendered by the events of the evening, had given rise to many currents of thought, some of which had never before occurred to him. He had not seen Dolores that evening. She had not appeared at the dinner-table, nor had she come into the drawing-room afterward. He was painfully conscious of her absence, and could not tell why ; and, despite all the annoyance caused by Mrs. Helmholtz and the manner of Mr. Hamilton, apropos of that unpleasantness, the face of Dolores seemed continually to rise before him, and the voice of Dolores to sound in his ear, and this fact troubled him, for in his experience of women it was rare. He never thought of them, except when for some specific reason he persistently fixed his mind on some one of them ; even then he often found it difficult. But now, do as he would, he could not drive this woman from his thoughts ; then he suddenly remembered Van Tassel, and he was sure he had not seen him for many days, although he had commanded him to come daily ; he remembered this with a sudden feeling of fury, and asked himself why his slave had dared to disobey him ?

"But, he will come to-night," he thought triumphantly, "for I promised him money, and he was nearly at his last dime then. Oh, yes, he will come to-night ! I shouldn't wonder if he is waiting for me now !"

He hastened his steps and was soon within the hotel ; and, as he hurried toward his room, he saw that the light was glimmering through a crack of the partly opened door—for the professor carried a key of Stanley's apartments.

"I thought so !" he muttered ; and, flinging open the



door, he entered noiselessly, slamming it behind him and locking it. Van Tassel looked up with an expression of reckless defiance. He was just recovering from the intoxication of opium, and for brief moments he would have defied Satan in person. Stanley had chanced on one of these moments.

"What the devil do you mean by glaring at me in that way?" he asked. "Haven't I the right to enter my own apartment?"

"I suppose so; I don't care," the other replied indifferently.

"Why haven't you been here every night, as I bade you?" said Stanley.

"Did you bid me so? When? I didn't know," said Van Tassel, mockingly.

"I'll make you know before I've done!" said Stanley, in a fury, and then with sudden concentrated bitterness: "You have lied to me! Even you can lie, it seems. I have seen Celestine."

Van Tassel bounded to his feet as if he had been galvanized.

"You have seen Celestine?" he repeated, and there was a singular gladness in his aspect. "How—when—where? Has Dolores, then, got this great power?"

"You thundering fool!" said Stanley, with overwhelming contempt. "You great, credulous baby—it wasn't at a spirit-seance. I have seen Celestine, and she was a mighty lively ghost—I'd rather have seen fifty airy spirits in gossamer than her one material, flesh-and-blood form, though she's handsomer than ever."

"I don't know what you mean," returned Van Tassel with bitter disappointment in his voice. "Celestine, poor girl, is dead—sunk in the quicksand where I found her little shoes, and in them her farewell letter."

"Oh, yes, I know—well, I don't know how she got



out of the quicksand, but her eyes are as sharp as ever, and she recognized me at the first glance."

"I thought she was dead, Carlos—Clarence—I swear to you I did."

"Yes, I can see you were deceived, just as she was; but now we have met again, and she means to give me trouble."

"But you shall do her justice, Carlos—you shall. I loved my little sister, you remember, and had she come to me—had she not left me at all, I never would have kept your secret."

"Well, you will keep it now," returned Stanley, with a serene tranquility that never failed to overpower his companion, "and there is no occasion for worry about your little sister. She has feathered her nest in the downiest manner—she is the wife of the most noble, the Baron von Helmholtz, and I couldn't marry her over again now, to save all our lives. On the contrary, I want to marry some one else—understand me, Van, I *want to marry* this some one else; and now do you see what is the matter?"

"You love her?" gasped Van Tassel. "You want to marry Dolores Mendoza because you love her, and you know it and admit it?"

"True as truth itself—I have only just found it out, Van, to-night. I may have had glimpses of it before, but I didn't know what it meant, the sensation was so new and delightful. Oh, I tell you it is the real thing—I tremble and choke at the sight of her—I feel good and noble when I'm in her presence. I would do anything, everything, only to win an approving smile from that girl."

"I warned you not to let her gain a power over you," said Van Tassel, gravely. "She will never love you,



and now you have lost your only chance of gaining anything from her."

"I tell you I will gain her. After all I have learned from these mighty tomes"—and he waved his hand toward the books brought to him at various times by the professor—"shall I not be able to mesmerize one slight girl?"

"No, not if she possesses over you that power which is greater than all other—the eternal magic of human love. Let her alone, my boy, and keep away from her, for she will never return your love. She is too far above you, and you can neither bring her down to your level nor can you rise to hers. Drop mesmerism and all belonging to it; you are playing with fire, and you will surely burn your hands. For the sake of old times, and since Celestine is alive and well and, perhaps, happy, I will give you a word of good advice, though you have not deserved it from me. Marry the pretty Miss Polly, who loves you, and be good to her, and give up the impossible. Wretched, forlorn and broken-down wretch as I am, I have known great power, though I have lost it; but you know nothing, Clarence, on the great subject, and you never will. Neither your mind nor your heart can grasp it. It needs a pure and noble purpose, a mind above this lower world and a heart free from all passion either for woman, gold or vengeance. Only such can succeed; all others are bound to fail."

Stanley burst into clear, ringing laughter.

"Well done, Van. I set you on your little hobby-horse, and you have had a nice little canter. So; so! Now come off and take a rest."

He was already making the well-known and unresisted mesmeric passes; and Van Tassel, who had exhausted the fitful energy bestowed on him by the stimulus of opium, was quickly under the power of his



master's will, and presently lay back in his chair, unconscious, the helpless victim of the strength that has no conscience.

Stanley's face had become fiend-like in its concentrated expression of cold and cruel selfishness.

"Why have you not been here every day, as I commanded you?" he asked.

"Because I found that I could resist your will."

"What gave you that power?"

"I saw that your will was under the influence of a higher will."

"Is it so now?"

"Not at this moment; the evil in your nature is now predominant over all other qualities, and it is the strongest part of you; it controls me through the worst part of me, which responds to it."

"Through it I can also control Dolores?" And the speaker's voice was almost tremulous with eagerness.

"Never! Her nature is too pure and noble—so fine that it even attracts the small remnant of good in yours. You can only overcome her through fear. Her feminine soul is so delicate that you may terrify her, but she is protected by all high and noble aspirations, and though you can trouble her, it is through her love for her friend. There are moments when she fears you—when you are entirely evil—and when she shrinks from you the most, then she is most at your mercy, for womanly terror overcomes her, and she has not yet learned her own power. But, beware! For it is as I have told you, and you are playing with fire."

Stanley smiled disdainfully.

"Thanks," he said, lightly. "Advice gratis, but not appreciated, as usual. You have saved me a heap of trouble, Van, in summing up the knowledge of this library of the occult sciences with which you have pro-



vided me, and which makes my head spin when I try to read it. I prefer to take my wisdom in small and concentrated doses. Wait a minute and I will let you go."

He went quickly toward a bureau in the farther part of the room, and when he returned, he carried a slender dagger about a foot long, which he had drawn from the sheath held in his other hand.

"You recognize it, Van," he said. "You remember giving it to me when I lost the other one. It has your name engraved on the steel. I have kept it ever since as a souvenir of our friendship. I am going to lend it to you, but be careful of it. I couldn't bear to have it lost."

A convulsive shudder shook the unconscious professor from head to foot as Stanley, having returned the dagger to its sheath, now placed it carefully in the half-closed hand that fell over the arm of the chair.

"Put it in your pocket, Van, and keep it carefully till wanted."

Van Tassel's fingers slowly closed upon the object he felt within his hand, but he seemed to make a determined effort to disobey the latter part of the order. A cold dew of terror was on his brow, his mouth twisted horribly and his eyelids twitched; and, raising his arm forcibly, he strove to fling the dagger from him; and he muttered:

"No, no; I will not! Though you should summon the powers of hell to help you, I will not obey!"

But his fingers remained closed, and his arm presently dropped back, powerless, and lay drooping over the arm of the chair.

"You mistake, Henri," said the voice of Stanley, cold and menacing and irresistible to the soul that heard it. "I said put the dagger in your pocket and keep it safe till I bid you use it. Do you understand?"



"I understand," moaned the victim.

"And you obey?"

"I obey."

His hand moved quickly toward the inner pocket of his coat, and the dagger was carefully concealed there.

A few minutes later, Professor Van Tassel was sitting up, pale and trembling, but quite awake, helplessly gazing into the smiling face of his master.

"It is quite an easy matter to mesmerize you now," said Stanley. "After this, I shall be able to control you at a distance. You will obey my thoughts."

Van Tassel shivered till his teeth chattered.

"Clarence, you are merciless," he said in a husky whisper.

"Not a bit of it," laughed Stanley. "Be a good dog, and you will find me a kind master. Ah, before I forget it!"

He drew out a handful of gold and bills and dropped them into the shaking, outstretched hand of the miserable wretch before him.

"And now go home and sleep. I have had enough of you for to-night, professor."

He unlocked the door and flung it open, and as he again closed it on the retreating form of Van Tassel he once more turned the key and shot the bolt.

"Happily, he cannot pass through bolts as well as locked doors," he said, with a grim smile; "or else, poor old Van, I think he would like to come back and use the dagger now, or, at least, when he finds that he has it."





## CHAPTER XIX.

### A CRY FOR HELP AND THE ANSWER.

When she had retired to her room, after parting with her lover, Polly Hamilton suddenly realized what she had never before so much as suspected, and that was that she possessed great latent capacity for suffering.

“I am surely the most unhappy girl in this great city to-night,” she thought. “I never supposed that I could be so unhappy. And yet I ought to have known it. Any one capable of being so happy as I have been all my life and so transcendently happy as I have been since Clarence and I have been engaged should be prepared for anything. I ought to have known that people can’t live in heaven in this world ; and yet that is just what I have been doing. Perhaps I have been selfish in my happiness, though I have not meant to be. Perhaps I ought not to have concealed it from papa and mamma ; but that is nonsense. Because I haven’t concealed it—I haven’t known how, even to please Clarence, and they have understood the whole thing just as well as if I had repeated every word that Clarence and I have said to each other. All the same, I am going to tell them now.”

And though it was nearly midnight, Mary Hamilton went swiftly to the room of her parents at the farther end of the hall, but not so far away but that this dearly



cherished child was at all hours within the sound of her mother's voice.

Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton had just ceased from speaking of Mary and her lover ; and it was with difficulty that the proud and happy mother refrained from congratulating her daughter on the probability that she would, after all, become the countess of Windermere.

" Papa, mamma !" exclaimed Mary, " I suppose I ought to have told you before now, but you know I am engaged to marry Clarence !"

Mr. Hamilton laughed and kissed his daughter ; and then, holding her off at arm's length, he said gravely :

" We have suspected it, both your mother and myself, for some time, and I think that Clarence himself is in the secret."

" Yes, dear ; but you know, papa, when I told you about the perfectly crazy story of Mrs. Helmholtz, you actually spoke to Clarence as if he was in some way to blame."

" Don't you mind that, Polly, you are not to be unhappy about anything that I may say to Clarence ; but one thing you may just settle down and build on, and that is that no man on earth is going to deceive my little girl or give her any cause to spoil her pretty eyes with crying, without giving a good account of the reason of it all to her old father. And now, good night, and go to bed, Polly."

Polly said good-night, and exchanged embraces and kisses with both father and mother ; and though her papa's words sounded vaguely threatening, they were also reassuring, for he had guarded her like a tender flower from every breeze of heaven, save such as were bringing gladness and happiness to her ; and not yet had pretty Polly Hamilton learned that griefs may come and will come, against which even love itself may



be quite powerless to shield. But she didn't go to bed, at least not yet ; instead, she ran swiftly toward the room of Dolores, and, finding her still up and apparently not thinking of sleep, she took her to task for having kept herself secluded all the evening.

Dolores looked sad and disturbed and seemed unwilling to explain why she had not appeared at dinner or afterward in the drawing-room.

"You know I am often gloomy and out of spirits," she said at last, "and really not fit company for happy young people of my own age who have never known sorrow."

"Yes, Rita, you have said such things to me before, and I am filled with self-reproach in hearing them, for surely I must be to blame if I cannot in some way make you forget your sorrows and give you happiness instead."

"You are never to blame in anything, Maruja !" exclaimed Dolores. "And always remember that I have said so. Whatever happens, and whatever I may do, remember that I love you above everything in my life except the memory of my mother. And now ask me nothing more to-night ; for, indeed, I can hardly explain to myself why I preferred to remain alone in my room this evening rather than to spend it as usual with you and your friends and your—I mean with Mr. Stanley."

She ended abruptly, and Polly felt her heart contract with jealous doubt and alarm, for Dolores was going to say "your lover" when she changed the phrase to that of "Mr. Stanley."

"She knows that he *is* my lover," thought Polly, "and yet she cannot bear to call him so. Oh, what does that mean ? It was only a day or two ago that Olive Gaye said she would not dare to have a friend so



beautiful as Dolores and a sweetheart so handsome as Clarence constantly looking at each other, even with a face that both ought to love between them. Oh, what a shrewd and terribly deep girl that is, and I am sure I shall always hate her after to-night ! But she does say things that seem full of an awful meaning."

Her gaze was fixed full on Dolores while these thoughts passed like lightning through her mind, and she saw the clear olive-cheek flush to the hue of carmine, and the deep luminous eyes grew dark and full of trouble, though they still gazed bravely back into her own.

"Trust me, Maruja," said Dolores ; "trust me ; for even when I give you pain believe that I love you then, perhaps, most of all. And now good-night. I want to think a little while before I sleep, and I am so tired."

Mary Hamilton impulsively caught the lovely Spanish girl in her arms and kissed her.

"Good night, then, my sweet sister ; but go to sleep soon, and don't think too hard. That is all I ask just now."

She hurried away, as if fearing to trust herself to say anything more ; and Dolores, her eyes shining through grateful tears, went toward the open window, from which she could catch a glimpse of the far-off broad river that flowed to the sea, and overhead that other illimitable and shoreless ocean of ether within which forever swung the countless millions of other worlds that men call "stars."

For a few minutes she remained gazing down on the streets below, but quickly her eyes sought the upper air, and her thoughts soon soared above the disquieting influences of the lower world, while peace and tranquillity stole in upon her soul.

"What mere atoms we are, all of us, in this endless



universe," she murmured, with a gentle tolerance toward everybody, "and yet how all-important, each one of us, to ourselves or to some one else. But for that, how glad I should be to lose myself forever in the great sea of space— What was that line mamma used to say from the old Scotch song?—' 'T is love, 't is love that makes the world go round'—that was the sentiment anyway! Dear Maruja! She fears that Clarence Stanley is falling in love with me, and from the depths of her own passion, she thinks no woman could fail to fall in love with him! And why does the man's presence disquiet me? I am so ignorant of this great passion of which poets sing and novelists write—this 'love that makes the world go round'—that I do not even know its signs. I am disturbed but not joyfully; I am excited but not with pleasure. No, no, this cannot be love! But whatever it is, it is making Maruja unhappy, and that must never be. Rather than bring unhappiness into her life I will vanish out of it forever, and he will see me no more. But is that necessary? Does my presence come between Maruja and her lover? Am I not vain and foolish to suppose it? Must I sacrifice this new and happy life for nothing! The only peace, the only happiness except my mother's love that I have ever known? I will not be rash. I will know the worst before I throw away substance for shadow. O mother—dear and best love of my life—be near me now as ever to comfort and help me!"

With a bitter moan of grief Dolores drew back from the window, and her gaze dropped from the clear and glittering expanse above her down toward the street below, and in that one swift glance she caught a glimpse of a white and supplicating face raised toward her own.

"Who is that? What does it mean? Surely I know



that face?" she thought; and in the next moment she was bending out of the window and gazing eagerly downward.

The face upraised to her was white and drawn with despairing misery; for when he had left the presence of Stanley, Van Tassel was conscious of some impending horror, all the more terrible because it was unknown and intangible. He felt only too sure that, while in the mesmeric trance, he had been bound, by the evil will which now controlled him, to a promise, the fulfillment of which might lead him into a crime, but which he was now quite powerless to resist. In his benighted mind he called on every power in Heaven or on earth to aid him, and suddenly, like a flash of light, the face of Dolores Mendoza seemed to rise before him. He had been walking listlessly to and fro, having stopped more than once or twice to refresh himself with brandy, and now he was being followed by a couple of very rough-looking tramps who had caught the glitter of gold when he had paid for his last drink of brandy. When he stopped suddenly, looking about him, they thought themselves detected; and spying the blue uniform of the police not far distant, they slouched into a dark lane and watched silently, while Van Tassel turned into a side street and pursued his way till, as he glanced upward, he suddenly saw the face of Dolores, radiant in the starlight, and looking to him like the face of his good angel smiling from the heavens.

"Help! Help!" he cried, and his hands were raised in supplication toward her.

"It is Mr. Van Tassel!" exclaimed Dolores, and in an instant she remembered all about him—the feeling of pity which had so touched her on their first meeting, the desire to protect him which had then actuated her and a sensation, so often experienced since, but not



understood, as if some one was crying out to her for assistance.

"What does he say?" thought Dolores, on beholding, from her window, the pale, drawn face of Van Tassel. "He is surely in some great trouble, and he is calling on me for help! I cannot speak to him from here; it is too far; and yet I cannot let him think me deaf to his call or unwilling to respond to it! Ah—yes!"

She had drawn back into the room, and now, as she looked about as if for some means of conveying a message, she saw on the flower-stand beside her a simple white rose, placed there hours before by Mary Hamilton.

"He will understand," she thought; and seizing the flower she flung it into the outstretched hands of Henri Van Tassel. He caught it and pressed it to his lips, and with it there came to him the same sense of strength—of being uplifted and invigorated—that had come to him when in her presence. He waved his hand toward her, and her face disappeared from the window, and he turned, to find himself in the grasp of the two tramps, who had approached in the shadow of the house, and, catching him now off his guard, seized him, gagged him with one hand, and bore him to the ground swiftly and without resistance. Van Tassel, who was but a slight man, of very little physical strength at any time, was easily overpowered, and would have been robbed instantly and without a struggle had not help come to him as suddenly and unexpectedly as he had been attacked.

At the moment when Dolores had appeared at the window, just after recognizing Van Tassel, a gentleman who had been approaching from the other direction, and who was a stranger to the country as well as to the metropolis, paused and said to himself, with a laugh:



“A custom of the country, I suppose, and much the same as in other countries, too—an American Romeo and Juliet.”

And as he stood for a moment in the shadow of a tree, his very natural suspicion seemed verified, and a white rose was flung down through the soft May air and was caught and rapturously kissed by the recipient. What happened next was all so rapid that no one of the participants could have clearly described it ; but the effect was to bestow blackened eyes and bloody noses on a couple of ruffians, who received these marks of favor with howls and execrations ; and when Dolores again—this time in alarm as well as surprise—looked out of the window, she saw the attacking party in full retreat and Henri Van Tassel, much disheveled and visibly excited, leaning against the shoulder of his rescuer.

Dolores, who had seen too many street-fights not to understand and whose first thought was for Van Tassel, flew from the room, down-stairs and out into the street, without pausing to think, and only took breath when she stood beside Van Tassel and held his trembling hand in hers.

“I hope you are not hurt ?” she said then ; but it was the stranger who replied to her ; for Van Tassel, suddenly aware of the brandy he had been drinking, shrank from her and only wished that the earth would open and swallow him.

“Your friend is not at all hurt,” said the stranger, whose voice was very full and deep and musical ; “he is not even robbed. I was just in time to frighten off the thieves before they had secured the plunder.”

“Oh, thank you !” said Dolores. “I—we, both of us, are very grateful. Mr. Van Tassel, please go directly home, will you not ? And, sir, if you *would* do so, it would be such a kindness, will you put him in a carriage



and tell the driver to take care of him ; but, indeed, I don't know where he lives."

Dolores remembered afterwards that the stranger had raised his hat and stood holding it in his hand, but bending slightly toward her while she spoke ; and she was vaguely conscious that she was being treated with as much respect as if she had been a princess ; but her cheeks were burning like fire, and she had dropped Van Tassel's hand which she had held, and which clung to her fingers like that of a frightened child.

"I will find out where to take him," said the stranger, when she ceased speaking, "and I will see him safely home ; you may trust me."

"Oh, thank you, thank you !" said Dolores, and for a brief second or two their gaze held each other, then he bowed, and she turned and disappeared into the house.

She could scarcely have counted sixty seconds since she left it, and yet she felt that something had happened that was to change her whole life. The stranger also felt that he could never forget those eyes, so full of child-like confidence, so deep and dark with passionate intensity.

"What a beautiful girl," he thought. "Who can she be?" and turning toward Van Tassel, "but what a choice for a lover !"





## CHAPTER XX.

### PLAYING WITH FIRE.

When Mary Hamilton and Dolores next met, there was on the face of the latter a reflection of "that light that never was on sea or land," and she had quite forgotten, for the moment, their conversation of the night before and the cause of it. When Clarence Stanley called, later in the day, he, too, observed that light, and quite misunderstood it. It was like a halo about her head and face, and when her eyes met his and seemed to bathe him in their shining loveliness, he did not suspect that she had looked through him without so much as seeing him ; and as his heart bounded to meet that look, he thought :

"The girl loves me ! I have seen that look before in women's eyes ; nothing but love ever calls it there ! but let me beware, as old Van says ; it is better she should do all the loving, since I can master her better that way. Confound Mary Hamilton ! If she would only leave us alone for half an hour together ! Let me once throw Dolores into the mesmeric trance now, and she is mine forever."

And Dolores, all unconscious of his presence, smiled at her own thoughts and passed on.

The triumph which Stanley now felt in his power



over Van Tassel, increased by what he mistook for open encouragement on the part of Dolores, made him comparatively indifferent to the effect of the unlucky *contretemps* between himself and Mrs. Helmholtz and the now evident jealousy of Mary Hamilton. He felt his position strong in every respect. Let "old Hamilton," as he now thought of him, suspect what he pleased ; let Polly be jealous either of Celestine or Dolores or both. There was but one person living who could disprove his present identity, and poor old Van was as harmless now as a toothless dog whose bark was silenced also. Had it not been that he had no other chance of seeing Dolores, he would not any longer go through the form of keeping up his intimacy with the Hamiltons. But until he had quite won Dolores it would be necessary to continue his visits to Polly ; and, in order to be ready for any contingency, it would be safer to remain on good terms with her parents. But nothing could exceed his self-confidence and placid indifference, and this manner of his, which was so genuine it did not need to be assumed, was powerful in its effect on Mr. Hamilton and his wife. It was, indeed, rather too powerful in its effect on Mrs. Hamilton.

"We have done wrong to show the least doubt of Clarence," said the anxious mother. "I fear it has offended him, and it may be the means of estranging him from Polly ; and now that you have convinced yourself that there can be no doubt of his succeeding to the title, what will become of us if anything should part him from Polly ? She has grown to almost worship him, and a separation between them, from any cause, would kill the dear child."

"What should separate them ?" exclaimed Mr. Hamilton. "Nonsense ! Hasn't a father a right to be particular ? My mistake was in not looking into his affairs



sooner ; and it still bothers me that I can meet no one who ever knew him in England. But, of course, that is all right. He is Clarence Stanley, and like enough to be Earl of Windermere by what I hear ; but don't say anything to him on that subject. If he were fifty earls rolled into one, he would not be too good for my daughter, and I wish you and Polly would remember that. She lets him see how fond she is of him far too much. You women ought to know enough to keep that more to yourselves. Tell Polly so. It would do the fellow good if she held him off a bit. And, bye the bye, since we are talking business, the Windermere estates are heavily mortgaged, and Clarence hasn't money enough to clear them. He knows that Polly's bank account will be seven figures on her wedding day, and he is by no means indifferent to that circumstance."

The result of this confidence between husband and wife was a half-playful, half-confidential conversation between mother and daughter, within the next twenty-four hours.

"And don't be so ready to throw yourself into his arms, Polly, dear," said Mrs. Hamilton in conclusion ; "for, really, men are so queer, and the best of them prefer the love that is the hardest to win."

"Oh, mamma," exclaimed Polly, between laughing and crying, "don't ever try to shine as a worldly-wise, maneuvering mother, for indeed the son-in-law that would be deceived by your artful wiles would not be worth the having !"

"And that's not Clarence," responded Mrs. Hamilton, "for he is worth the having. But remember what I say, Polly, dear, all the same."

"I will try to, mamma, dear ; but I am afraid it is rather late in the day," sighed Polly.

And that is how it chanced, when on the next day



that Stanley called and asked for Miss Hamilton, he was told to wait in the drawing-room, if he was able to spare time, because Miss Polly was very much engaged.

“Poor Polly Hamilton !”

If she had tried for a month to think of the one thing above all others that would, at that moment have pleased Stanley the most, she could not have been more successful than she was now in sending him that cool and careless message ; for, as he entered the drawing-room, Stanley was aware that Dolores was seated at the farther end of it, half buried in an arm-chair and sorting a pile of yellow roses that lay on her lap. Never had she looked so beautiful.

She did not attempt to leave the room ; indeed, Stanley's presence had become a matter of indifference to Dolores. Another atmosphere now wrapt her so completely from his influence that she had forgotten even her former dislike and fear of him ; and that feeling which, combined with her love and anxiety for Polly Hamilton, had so troubled her that she could not tell if she was repelled or attracted, was now so entirely in abeyance that for the present, she was no longer conscious of it.

She looked up as he approached her and said, with a careless nod :

“Polly will be here presently. Sit down.”

“The longer she stays away the better I shall be pleased,” said Clarence, drawing forward a chair so that he sat directly opposite Dolores.

She looked up in mute questioning of his words, but she made no other answer.

“Because her absence gives me the pleasure of a little talk with you, fairest cousin, and I have too little of that.”

Dolores had put two beautiful amber-colored roses



together, and laid them against the front of her corsage—it was now June, and she wore a loose gown of cool, white India silk, without color or any ornament, for she was still in mourning. But the golden hue of the flowers, like prisoned sunshine against her dress, had a perfectly dazzling effect, together with the gleaming light of her eyes through her long lashes and the sheen of her bronze-brown hair.

“You are very beautiful !” said Stanley.

How often he had said those words to other women—how often he had laughed in his heart at the other women to whom he had said them. But now they really seemed to have a meaning, and his breath came quick and his pulses throbbed while he watched this woman to whom they seemed to have no meaning.

“Do you think so?” asked Dolores, with supreme indifference. “What do you know of beauty?”

“Not much, indeed, cousin, till I met you,” said Stanley, with a humble sincerity he had never practiced till that moment.

Yes, it was true, he said to himself—all he had told Van Tassel, and more, too. He loved, adored, worshiped this girl. She might, if she cared, make of him what she would—something even good enough to be loved by herself—or good or bad, what mattered it? He could give up the whole world and all that it contained, content only to sit at her feet and worship there, if she would but let him.

“You must not call me ‘cousin,’ ” laughed Dolores, mockingly. “I don’t believe we are even cousins.”

“Then something nearer, dearer, Dolores. I love you ! I love you ?”

He bent toward her and would have taken her hand, but she snatched it from his touch and pushed back her



chair with a movement of violent, passionate fear and loathing.

"Don't dare to touch me!" she cried. "You love me? Oh, you are mad!"

"I am—mad, or anything you choose to make me; but listen, Dolores—you *shall* listen! I love you! I have never before loved any woman. I did not know I could love. I am bad; I am evil. I know it; I acknowledge it. But to love you would redeem any man. I feel myself exalted, purified when I am near you. You can make me an angel like yourself. Without you, I shall be, as I have ever been, a devil! Think, girl, that you can save a soul from Satan. Does that mean nothing to an angel such as you are? It is your mission to save me. I belong to you. Is it my fault that I have borne a heritage of evil handed down to me for hundreds of years, while you have inherited only goodness and purity? It is your duty to redeem me—the debt my Indian ancestor owes to me. Dolores! Dolores! We are the last of our race. To us belongs the countless treasure of the Mendozas. It is ours to enjoy, ours to possess it forever, ours to lift the curse of the Indian woman from the race of the Mendozas. You said but now that I was not your cousin. Behold! Is not this the birthmark of the Mendozas?"

With a sweeping gesture he pushed back the golden hair from his temple, and there Dolores beheld the well-known birthmark inherited from Pedro Mendoza.

"The black heart!" she cried. "Oh, come not near me! Murderer, doubly, trebly accursed! Yes, you do indeed bear the mark of the Mendozas; but only those of the black heart are cursed past redemption. Maruja! Maruja! Even your love cannot save him!"

She wrung her hands passionately together, while a low moan of the deepest distress burst from her lips;



her face became set and white, her eyes rolled wildly, then closed as if suddenly glued together ; and, as she sank helpless into her chair, her head fell back, and Stanley saw that she had become unconscious.

It was so sudden, so unexpected, that he could hardly comprehend what had happened ; but in the next moment his heart gave an exultant bound.

“At last, at last !” he muttered. “I would have loved her ; I would have knelt at her feet as a slave ; but she would not have it so ; now she is at my mercy, and she shall be the slave, not I !”

He would have taken a step toward her, but his feet seemed glued to the floor ; he raised his hands, but when he would have waved them before her face they seemed suddenly like lead, while a cold breeze seemed to strike a chill to his very heart.

“What is this ?” he thought. “Am I then powerless over her ?”

He seemed to hear the hollow echo of a mocking laugh, and every evil instinct of his nature rose to fight for him. Let come what might, he would compel her to see the treasure and describe its hiding-place. Gold, gold ! That was the passion of his soul, and now he returned to it with feverish gladness, all the more its devoted slave because of his brief infidelity, his fleeting fancy for a woman’s love.

“Can you see the hiding-place of the Mendoza treasure in the Santiago Canyon ?” he asked imperiously.

“I am there,” said the voice of Dolores ; yet not her voice, as it seemed to Stanley, though speaking through her lips.

“Describe the place.”

“Near a sycamore tree, far up the canyon, where the wild pansies, the poppies and the blue forget-me-nots star the ground.”



“ Can you see beneath the earth ?”

“ Yes, where gold lies in veins through the earth and a thousand rich and rare jewels lie buried.”

“ How can I reach it ?”

“ That I shall not tell you ?”

“ You shall ; I command you !”

“ I will not obey.”

Stanley bent forward and, with all the force of his strong and evil will, fixed his gleaming eyes on the still white face before him, and with set teeth and hands clenched, he hissed in low, vibrant tones :

“ I command you, by the strength of my will and by all the depths of evil in my soul, that evil which you fear and tremble at, to answer and obey me !”

“ I refuse and I defy you !”

Choking with rage, blind with fury, he would have rushed on the slight and quivering form in the effort to wrench by physical force the obedience he could not command ; but when he would have seized the insensible form of Dolores, his arms once more fell, powerless, to his sides and a shock as if from an electric battery thrilled through him from head to foot. Again a cold breeze, chill, benumbing, horrible, smote on his face, and a pale silvery mist, shot through with glittering dust of fire, seemed to rise between him and Dolores. It grew denser and the air grew colder ; and a shadowy face, dark, menacing, terrible, looked at him, while two great, glowing eyes glared on him so fiercely they seemed to burn into his brain. With a smothered imprecation of fear and impotent rage, Stanley fell back before the look of those eyes ; and when they had faded away and all the air was clear again, he rubbed his own eyes as one awaking from sleep and darted forward toward Dolores.

The chair in which she had been seated was empty ;



the door close beside it was open, and she had evidently left the room.

"What is the meaning of all this?" exclaimed Clarence. "Is it magic? Witchcraft? Or have I been asleep, drugged, hypnotized?"

He turned and strode across the room toward the other door, and as he parted the curtains he found himself confronted by a face, so drawn, contorted, livid with suffering that he looked long upon the once familiar features before he recognized them. Then he said:

"Polly! Oh, Polly! Is it you?"

"Yes, Clarence—it is I!"

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## CHAPTER XXI.

### SOME OF THE RESULTS.

Her voice was changed as greatly as her face; and pushing aside the curtain, she entered the room, sinking heavily into the nearest chair.

"How long have you been here?" he said at last.

"I don't know; I can't tell. It seems a long while."

"How much have you heard?"

"Everything, I suppose; but I understand nothing—nothing, except that you love Dolores—only Dolores. You have never loved me—never loved any one but Dolores, only Dolores—always and always Dolores! Oh, my Rita, my Rita, whom I loved! Oh, my Clarence, my Clarence, who never loved me!"

"Polly, Polly, won't you listen? Can you forgive?"

"Please, don't—oh, please, don't speak to me! Only go away now and leave me! Please, only go away just now and let me be alone!"



Stanley turned from her quickly. He was, indeed, stifling, choking, and he gladly rushed into the hall and out into the street. The situation was become too much even for his iron nerves, and although the cool air seemed to brighten his mind and bring back his scattered wits, he walked as in a nightmare.

It was Mrs. Hamilton, who coming into the drawing-room a few minutes later, found her daughter fallen in a heap upon the floor, her hands clenched as if in maddening pain and her poor, distraught, tortured face pallid as if stamped with the seal of death.

At first the shocked and horrified mother could not even call for help ; but as soon as her voice returned, the whole household was in a state of the wildest confusion ; and it was not until Doctor Macdonald arrived and assured her that Mary was not dead, although sunk in a prolonged and dangerous swoon, that Mrs. Hamilton could put on the outward semblance of calmness. At length, the poor girl returned to consciousness, and the long-drawn sighs and pitiful moans that then escaped her lips were harder still to bear than the silence which had preceded them.

With instinctive precaution, the poor mother had dismissed every one from the room, except the physician, at the first sign of returning consciousness on the part of her child.

“ No one except those who love her—and Doctor Mac does love Polly—shall hear what she may say, poor darling, if she ever speaks again ! ”

Something like this was the unformulated thought of Mrs. Hamilton's mind, and although she acted upon it, she was hardly aware of her own wisdom in doing so. But Mary did not seem disposed to speak, only gazing pitifully at her mother and at the doctor when she had sufficiently recovered to recognize them. Then her



eyes filled with tears, which slowly rolled down her pallid face, while strangling gasps and sighs broke from her lips.

Mrs. Hamilton would have clasped her daughter in her arms, and would have held her head to her heart as when a little child—for when had Polly ever known a grief that she could not sooth and hush and kiss away—and it was maddening now that she could not so much as put in words her sympathy and sorrow. But Doctor Macdonald checked her with an imperative look, and placing his finger on his lips indicated that the tears which were now being forced from Polly's eyes, and the sobs and sighs that were shaking her slight form would do more to carry off the first weight of her sorrow than anything that could be put into words.

"Let her weep," he whispered, presently. "Words will only stop the flow of tears—let her weep. The grief that dissolves in tears will never break the heart."

Mrs. Hamilton could only reply by frantic but helpless wringing of her hands. Why should any one speak of Polly's heart breaking? What cruel grief had been cast on her innocent, sweet child to cause such tears? Oh, it was surely unjust of heaven to torture any one so good and kind and gentle! Her dear little Polly, who had never caused a moment's pain or sorrow to any living thing!

Meantime Polly wept silently, bitterly and with a fearful sinking of the heart—a terrible despair—as she told herself over and over again the words which had caused her anguish; but as her tears increased, and as her sobs grew more convulsive, and then slowly calmed and finally ceased, the first, awful burning pain of her grief passed away, and she thought suddenly, and with a strange frantic hopefulness:



"There must be some mistake—I did not quite understand, I know—I am sure it cannot be so dreadful as I have thought."

Then suddenly sitting up, she said :

"Mamma, where is Rita? Won't you send her to me? I must speak with her! I am quite well now, quite well—it was nothing but a shock, and I haven't quite understood—but I must see Rita, and then, mamma dear, afterward—I will tell you all about it."

"But, Polly—"

Doctor Macdonald quickly made a sign to Mrs. Hamilton, and then said to Polly :

"You shall do just as you please, my dear. A nice, confidential talk with your young friend will do you all the good in the world; and if you will promise to take a certain bitter drink that I will send you—very bitter, but very toning and quieting for the nerves—I think I will say good-bye, for the present."

He had taken Mary's hand while he spoke and held his finger on her pulse for just one minute, and then, gently patting her cheek, he turned away, and Mrs. Hamilton, promising to send Dolores immediately, followed Doctor Macdonald from the room.

This kind-hearted physician had seen the inside workings of too many households to ask any questions when he saw signs of sudden and terrible mental and nervous trouble; but he was certainly amazed to find them here; for Mrs. Hamilton had already told him all she knew of the condition of her daughter, and that she had left her in a state of perfect health, to receive a visit from her *fiancé*, only half an hour before the time she found her utterly collapsed and unconscious on the floor.

"Is there any danger, doctor?" she asked. "Don't deceive me. Is it her heart? Is it some unknown malady that we have never suspected?"



"There is no danger, madam," the physician hastened to assure her, as he continued to fill out a prescription which was only a simple tonic and nervine combined. "Miss Polly is not the girl to die of a heartache ; but you may as well understand that she has had a severe shock. No doubt you will soon know much more about it than I ever shall ; but my advice is to take her away from here as soon as you can ; let her have new scenes, new friends ; but above everything else, a new lover. Pardon me for saying so, I mean it only for your child's good, but I never liked the old lover ; he had the look of a cruel and treacherous villain under his infernal beauty. I know I shock you, but I am a physiognomist and a physiologist, and I speak painful truths."

"Oh, Doctor Macdonald, you are prejudiced !" exclaimed Mrs. Hamilton. "You don't like handsome men—"

"We won't discuss that, my dear lady, but don't keep Miss Polly waiting ; send her young friend to her."

He hurried away before Mrs. Hamilton, who was indeed too much dazed to pursue the conversation, could say anything further ; and she mechanically proceeded toward the room of Dolores ; remembering now what she had been too excited to remark, although dimly conscious of it all the time, that notwithstanding the tumult of alarm concerning Polly, Dolores had not yet appeared to inquire into the cause of it.

"Mary would like to speak to you, Dolores," she said, when the latter opened the door. "She is in her room."

Never had Mrs. Hamilton addressed her in such a tone, and Dolores, who had been colorless as marble, felt her face flush to the very roots of her hair ; for there was contempt, anger, scorn and wounded feeling in the voice of Polly's mother—that voice which had



always been filled with maternal gentleness toward the lonely and motherless girl.

"I will come to her at once," was the answer in low and tremulous tones, which went to Mrs. Hamilton's heart ; but she would not permit herself to be moved.

What kind of a girl was this, who could remain in her room without so much anxiety as to ask a question when the whole household had been turned upside-down by Mary's inexplicable illness ? It was evidently not inexplicable to her, or why was she so pale and agitated ? And by this time Mrs. Hamilton had remembered that Dolores was in the drawing-room when Stanley had been shown into it. She must, then, have still been there when Mary entered. She must have known why she had fainted. More than that, she was, perhaps, the cause of that dreadful and unexplained swoon which had seemed to threaten the very life of her child. All this passed through the anxious mother's mind in an instant, and produced its effect before she was aware of it ; and although she felt the unconscious pathos in Dolores' voice, she hardened her heart against it and turned resolutely away.

Dolores was only vaguely aware that something terrible had occurred. She knew that the nervous seizure, trance, or whatever it was to which she was occasionally subject, had overtaken her while listening to the frantic address of Clarence Stanley. She knew that he had professed to love her ; but of all that had been said, either by him or through her own lips while she was in the mesmeric condition, she was entirely ignorant. She only knew that when she recovered from it, like a person awaking suddenly but completely from a brief sleep, she saw him as through some luminous mist, staring straight before him, with fixed gaze and apparently terrified. She was herself aware of that



strengthening, comforting and tranquilizing presence that had so often come to her in moments of peril or other critical times ; and then she glided quickly from the room, and in doing so, she seemed to be obeying a directing voice which, without being heard, made itself entirely understood.

But she had neither seen Polly Hamilton enter, nor had she any suspicion that Polly had come upon the scene unperceived. She seemed to herself to have awakened from a dream, which she vainly tried to remember ; and she was thinking, in a rather frightened way, of this curious “trance,” which had now twice overtaken her in Stanley’s presence, when she became aware of the sudden commotion in the house ; and opening her door to inquire the cause, she heard Mrs. Hamilton giving wild directions about sending for a doctor.

Dolores retreated into her room, as if she had received a blow.

With appalling clearness, she felt what had taken place, and she was overcome with all the horror of one who has unwittingly but surely killed the dearest friend on earth. She sank into a chair and rocked to and fro in abject misery, wringing her hands and repeating over and over again :

“Maruja knows ! Maruja has heard all ! What shall I do ? What shall I do ? It will kill her, and I shall be the unhappy cause ! Oh, why did I not go at first ? Why did I linger here after I saw the first suspicion in her mind ? What fatal fascination—what misunderstood terror of that man—held me here ? If I had only listened to the inward prompting of my soul when I first saw him ! But I feared to leave her. I hoped to have helped her. I was in a maze of doubt and uncertainty. Even the intuition that has always



kept my spirit free in its darkest moments seemed clouded, so that I no longer understood its guidance. Then *he* came, and in that brief moment of our meeting it seemed as though our spirits touched. The soul looking out of his eyes into mine seemed the other half of my own, and to the last moment of existence I must feel that I am one with him and he with me. Ah, yes, now I know and shall know forever this is love and I love that man?"

Her thoughts flew to the night when Van Tassel had seemed to call on her for help, and to the moment when she had stood face to face with the stranger who had so suddenly come to the assistance of the unlucky professor, and there she paused. Though still in a state of horror unspeakable about Mary, she was still, in memory, gazing back into those wonderful eyes that held her own with a new, strange and delightful power, when Mrs. Hamilton's summons sharply recalled her thoughts to the present.

And now she knew, from the voice and manner of Maruja's mother, that her worst suspicions were correct; but she attempted no justification, no explanation. With the swift decision that always characterized her in any emergency, she rose at once to meet it.

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## CHAPTER XXII.

### A PLEASING ALTERNATIVE.

When Clarence Stanley reached his room, the conflicting feelings that had been agitating him since he met Dolores that day had all been merged into a burning rage, and that emotion was now at a white heat.



His first act was to collect into a heap, in the middle of the floor, all the books on mesmerism, clairvoyance and kindred subjects which Van Tassel had brought to him, he then relieved his feelings by kicking the lot, collectively and separately, swearing continuously in a strain calculated to turn the air blue all around him.

"Infernal rubbish!" he finally wound up, with a feeling of positive refreshment at this relief to his pent-up fury, mortification and disappointment. "A pretty muddle I have made of the whole affair—putting my foot in it is nowhere! I have jumped into the bog up to my waist, and every step I might make I would only flounder deeper. That idiot Van—he said I would burn my fingers, and I've done it! Playing with fire, indeed! I've made a regular bonfire, and I'm scorched to the eyebrows! I've lost Polly and her millions—the one certain prize in the lottery. If Celestine gets another square look at me, it's all up with the Honorable Clarence, and I may have to run for my life; and as to the Mendoza treasure and the heiress, that is farther off than ever. But what is the mystery about that girl? Is she a witch? Did she magnetize me, or is Van right, and has she really some angelic protection beyond my power to control or understand? Rubbish! The whole thing is nonsense, even to my power over the simple fool. He fears me and believes my will all-powerful, because drink and opium have destroyed his own. Well, there, at least, I am safe, and I will use him for my advantage. For the rest, I must look things squarely in the face and make a new deal."

And, as if to facilitate this, a letter was at this moment handed in at the door, and the waiter delivered it with the words that it had been brought "by messenger, with orders to put it directly into Mr. Stanley's hands."

"A woman's message, of course," thought Stanley,



with a slight feeling of perturbation ; for he felt that in the eyes of the Hamilton family he was covered with the most shameful contempt, and might even expect to be called to very sharp account by Mary's father. "From Polly, I suppose. I can never see the girl again—no, not even if she were willing to forgive everything. A girl who *could* forgive that scene to-day would be insupportable. Not all old Hamilton's millions could redeem her, though I am fond of gold."

This Stanley said to himself, with that curious desire to whitewash his character in his own eyes, that comes, at times, to the worst sort of men. In reality, he was wishing in his inmost heart that things might turn out so that he could make up with Polly, hasten their marriage and settle down to the comfortable possession of "old Hamilton's millions ;" and as he turned the letter about and glanced at the address on it, he was conscious of a distinct throb of disappointment at seeing that the handwriting was wholly unknown to him. He tore it open at once and glanced at the signature, and his disappointment was changed to amazement and curiosity.

"Olive Gaye," he read. "Now, what on earth can that girl have to say to me ? She is a deep one, and it was she who brought Celestine to call on Polly Hamilton. What new complication is waiting for me ?"

"DEAR MR. STANLEY"—wrote Miss Gaye—"I am sure you will pardon the liberty I take in addressing you when I explain the reason. I cannot feel, anyway, that we are strangers, having known your dear papa and the rest of the family so well, and being also aware of the unfortunate misunderstanding between you and your relatives. But for that, dear Mr. Stanley, I should not be in a position to offer you the important news



now in my possession, for you would have known it first. As it is, both you and the newspaper-reading public at large will be in possession of it—perhaps to-morrow morning ; and that is why I wish to say *that it is absolutely necessary for your future happiness and comfort that you should see me first*. I shall remain at home all day, and I have given orders that no one shall interrupt the confidential conversation which I am now ready to have with you. Do not, I beg of you, keep me waiting one minute longer than is absolutely necessary. It will be very impolite in you and very unflattering to me, but above all, it will be disastrous to your future.”

This remarkable effusion then ended by the writer subscribing herself :

“ Dear Mr. Stanley's sincere and constant friend,

“ OLIVE GAYE.”

“ Now, what in the devil's name does she mean, or what does she want ?” exclaimed Stanley. “ There is a menace in this which I can partly guess at, remembering that she is, by this time, deep in Celestine's confidence. But what is this particular information in regard to my family ? Well, I suppose the easiest way to answer that is not to keep her waiting ; for I may need all the information I can pick up in regard to my English family.”

He read the letter carefully a second time, in order to impress it upon his memory, and then, having torn it into fragments, he was presently on his way to call on Olive Gaye.

“ So good of you to come at once,” said Miss Gaye. “ I felt sure it would shock you less to hear of your bereavement from an old friend of the family than to have it come on you with the abruptness of mere tele-



graphic news from England, particularly as you did not even know of their illness. Poor Lord Appleby ! There has long been no hope, nor for the dear child, either ; but the boy died first, and within an hour the father. My news comes in the form of a cable dispatch, and, therefore, I have no particulars ; but, without doubt, Lord Appleby's death was accelerated by the death of his heir and only child."

A slight exclamation escaped the lips of the Hon. Clarence Stanley, but he instantly repressed all signs of emotion and, slowly sinking into the chair indicated by his hostess when he first entered the room, he said :

"Do you mean, Miss Gaye, that my brother and his little son are both dead ?"

"Lord Appleby and his son are dead," returned Olive, with special emphasis.

"Indeed !" exclaimed Clarence. "I am shocked, truly, but I shall not pretend to any great grief. We have been long parted, you know, Miss Gaye."

"Oh, yes, indeed !" assented Olive.

"And, since you know the affairs of my family so well, of course you know that I was never in sympathy with them, nor they with me."

"I quite understand that," said Olive.

"May I inquire from whom you have received your information, Miss Gaye ?"

"The dispatch is from dear old Toddlekins, Mr. Stanley," replied Olive, with a wicked smile. "Dear old Toddlekins, whom you have so entirely forgotten. It would quite break her heart to know this, for she simply adored Clarence Stanley. It was she who showed me the picture I told you of, you know, and the old darling has actually lent it to me."

She turned to an album on the table and took from it a photograph which was lying loose within the leaves.



"I find it is not nearly so good a likeness of you as I thought ; indeed, if you will pardon the compliment, it doesn't do you justice. You are very much handsomer ; but I'm afraid you are a sad deceiver, Mr. Stanley. See, now, here is written by the beloved hand of that Clarence whom she adored : 'To his dearly loved friend, Milicent Fairfax,' and you cruelly declared that you didn't remember her—indeed your manner implied that you were unconscious of her existence."

She held the picture close to her face for a moment, then her keen, bright, penetrating eyes looked over the top of it at the face of her companion that was now very pale, but set and defiant, and she only liked him the better for that look, as she thought :

"Yes, he will fight, and with me to back him we shall win, for we shall both fight."

"It is a long time ago, Miss Gaye," he said, seeing that she waited for an answer, "and I have a poor memory, sometimes."

"Yes, so I have observed," said Olive, "and yet—poor Celestine ! *She* remembers *you* so well ; it was too cruel."

Her listener started violently ; but he wouldn't yield yet.

"Confound the woman !" he thought. "How much does she know ? And is it knowledge or suspicion ? What is her game ? I must know before I commit myself."

"Celestine ?" he repeated. "Really, Miss Gaye, you have the advantage of me."

"Yes, indeed," laughed Olive, "I think I have, Mr. Carlos Mendoza."

The man before her cowered—instinctively his glance wavered, and he looked about as if for some means of escape ; but the next moment he "pulled himself



together"—Olive saw and admired the mental effort—and then he said, in cold incisive tones :

"Perhaps it would be better if we understood each other, without any further fencing, Miss Gaye ; and if we are going to row in the same boat let us pull in the same direction."

Olive gave a laugh, full of delighted appreciation.

"You are a man after my own heart, Carlos," she said, "and like enough to get it too."

"Ah, thanks, if it is as good as your head, Miss Olive, it will be a prize for any man ; but let me suggest, my dear girl, that acquiring bad habits is easier than getting rid of them. It might be *a very* bad habit to begin by calling me Carlos."

"You are right, dear Clarence—I shall not forget again."

For a few moments they looked each other squarely in the eyes, smiling ; then Olive replaced the photograph in the album.

"I shall not need it any more," she said, "I shall return it to Toddlekins—dear old soul ! She values it more than her life ; but I shall prefer a new one. Next time you call on me, Clarence, bring me a really good and satisfactory photograph of yourself, won't you, dear ?"

"The best I can get, and now, dear Olive, tell me, how much do you know ?"

"Everything," laughed Olive, "absolutely everything—according to what the scientists call inductive reasoning. As to fact, plain, cold, hard fact—well, enough—quite enough to hang you, but not quite enough to save you. Now I fancy there may be side lights that you can turn on, which will change the more lurid colors into paler lines. According to Celestine, the man who was brought home to her, pierced



through as she supposed, with his own dagger, had been foully murdered."

"There was no murder about it, nothing but a hand-to-hand fight, at a time and under circumstances when fights ending fatally were of daily occurrence. It was a fair fight, self-defense on the part of both. Had I not killed him, he would have killed me; and your friend's Clarence was a brave man and fought well; and it was after he was dead that the idea of personating him came to me. The resemblance between us was extraordinary, so much so that I suspected some relationship and that we both belonged to the Mendoza family, even before I found the birthmark on his brow."

"Which was a bright red, however, while on you it is black," interrupted Olive.

"You are correct and also sharp," said Stanley (or Mendoza if the reader prefers, though he continued to be known only as Clarence Stanley). "Had Celestine been half as clever as you are, she would never have been deceived about the dead man. But I counted on her agitation and excitement, and the plan worked. With the assistance of Van Tassel, the man whom she called her brother, I changed clothes with the dead man, and took possession of his papers, letters, journals, etc., by means of which I have been able ever since to personate him. But among his papers I never found anything about this old maid whom you call Toddlekins—"

"And several other things which I shall be able to tell you," said Olive. "Among others, there is an heir-at-law, a certain Lord Harold Moray, who is now in this country, in search of the Honorable Clarence Stanley, and who, in the event of his decease, is the next heir to the earldom and estates of Windermere."



"The deuce !" exclaimed Stanley. "I never heard of him !"

"So I supposed ; nor of his sister Constance, to whom Clarence Stanley was engaged when he left England."

"There was nothing about either of them in any of the letters and papers I found," said her listener aghast at these revelations.

"I guessed as much from my dear Toddlekings's letters. But it would have been rather awkward had Lord Harold suddenly confronted you either here or in England."

"And it will be so still—deucedly awkward."

"Not so bad as it might have been had you neglected to have this conversation with me. As it is, forewarned is forearmed, and you are quite too clever to be overcome by so small a difficulty as that."

"I am not so sure. A few more such shocks and tumbles as I have had of late will shake my nerves."

"Not a bit of it, with me to steady you," said Olive. "You see, I intend to be the Countess of Windermere ; and, although the old earl is madly in love with me and plaguing me to death to marry him, I have taken a fancy to have a young husband. If your nerve fails you now, you lose Polly Hamilton ; for Celestine will yet learn the truth. You lose all chance of the Mendoza treasure" (again her listener winced and asked himself : "Is there anything this girl doesn't know ?") "and you lose the estates and title of Earl of Windermere. The alternative is simply—"

She paused and smiled bewitchingly.

"To marry you and gain all that is worth having," said her companion, filling that pause. "Truly a pleasing alternative, and I think I will accept it. But now to arrange a plan of action and prepare for all possible



contingencies. What do you know of the Mendoza treasure?"

"Only what I have heard incidentally from remarks dropped by Polly Hamilton, and later from Celestine, that your first knowledge of her was made through the hope of finding out something about its hiding-place."

"In which I was confoundedly taken in ; but no matter ! I know all about it now, and together you and I will go to California and search for it. You are the cleverest woman I ever met in my life, and I shall end by being as madly in love with you as—ahem—the old earl, my father."

Olive smiled serenely, and began to think the partner of her ambitious plans a most charming person.

"With the Mendoza fortune and the Windermere estates and title," continued the Honorable Clarence, "we can rival the state of any prince and princess."

"Precisely what I have been thinking, my dear Clarence, ever since I received old Toddlekins's message. But there are several lions in the way. First you have to break with Polly Hamilton—"

"That is over and done with," was the prompt reply.

"And then there is the recognition, or lack of recognition, on the part of Lord Moray and his sister. That, I think, you can deal with on the score of long absence ; and if the lady is troublesome, it can be set down to jealousy and revenge, because you have broken your engagement and married a brighter and cleverer girl. I don't fear the Morays at all—I can deal with them—also the old earl, as he always hated you and will now add the rage of jealousy to his original hate, when you re-appear in the character of my husband. There will, however, be one pair of eyes that cannot be blinded ; there will be no deceiving Toddlekins. But she adores me, and I shall tell her, with my arms about



her neck, that you and I are one; that she cannot injure you without injuring me doubly, and that will settle it. Toddlekens will give us no trouble. But, last of all, there is Celestine. That woman adores you, Carlos—I mean, Clarence—and the extraordinary resemblance between these two men is working in her mind like yeast in flour. If a living Clarence can so resemble her dead Carlos, why might not a dead Clarence resemble her living Carlos! Already that is to her the one vital question of her life, and the truth will dawn on her before long.”

A ferocious look overspread the smiling face of the man who had been listening with admiration to the unfolding of a mind keener and deeper than his own to scheme and plan. Olive had a momentary spasm of alarm at this glimpse into a dark and cruel nature. But she had now no thought of drawing back. Ambition was her ruling passion, as the love of gold was his; and she only trembled for a moment when he said, fiercely :

“Celestine! She will never stand in my way! I will take care of Celestine!”

“Ah! Then there is nothing more, I think.” And Olive rose and held out her hand. “I have kept you a long time, but it will save all future mistakes. Come again in the evening; I want to introduce you to my uncle. It may be useful.”

Stanley gallantly raised her hand to his lips, and felt that he was now, at last, on the high-road to success. When the door had closed behind him, Olive ran lightly to her room, seated herself at her writing-desk and scrawled, with her left hand, a brief, anonymous message.

“I don’t know what his plan in regard to Celestine may be,” she thought. “My good Clarence! He is



immensely gifted, but he has a way of just missing success. Now, with my assistance, we will change all that, so that he will hit the bull's-eye every time."

She hastily scrawled an address on the back of her letter :

.....  
: THE BARON VON HELMHOLTZ, :  
: No. — —nd Street, West, :  
: New York City. :  
: .....  
.....

For this letter she summoned no servant, but, going out for a walk, she presently dropped it, with her own small steady hand, into a pillar-box, and drew a quick breath of relief.

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## CHAPTER XXIII.

### A GIRL'S FIRST LOVE.

When Dolores entered Mary Hamilton's room, she found the latter, still tremulous and weak, seated in her favorite chair—a deep, wide bamboo chair, almost as large as a lounge and filled with bright-colored, silk-covered cushions. Dolores had come quickly, feeling that if she paused to think she would never have the courage to seek her at all ; and now, with the impetus of that thought still on her, she entered and went swiftly toward her friend, only to stop suddenly and quite overcome at the sight of the white and stricken face before her ; for Polly had risen to her feet and had come forward a step or two to meet her.



For quite a half-minute, the two girls stood and looked deep into each other's eyes, Polly pleading, pathetic, submissive, and Dolores suddenly strong and helpful, for she had expected tears and passionate reproaches, such as she knew not how to meet or answer. But what she found was so entirely different, that it helped her in what she had already decided that she must do.

Instinctively she opened her arms as a mother might have approached a grieved child, and Mary flung herself into that protecting, loving embrace.

"Oh, Lorita!" she said, her arms clinging about the other girl's neck and her head resting on her shoulder. "He loves you! He loves you! How am I to bear it?"

"No, Maruja, he does *not* love me," returned Dolores, with an accent of calm conviction, that had an immediate effect on her listener.

Mary Hamilton had, from the moment of their first meeting, felt such confidence in Dolores that, as she had always declared, her very presence was tranquilizing and gave her a feeling of strength and security, as if her spirit were raised above the ordinary, every-day world. She experienced that effect now, with an indescribable sense of being restored to life and happiness, much as if she had been awakened from a horrible but too real dream. She could not forget the words she had heard, but, surely, she had strangely misunderstood the meaning of them. She sank back again into her chair, but she drew Dolores down beside her, and, with her arm close about her, she said in a questioning voice, but with a manner of perfect faith:

"I heard his words, dear. He said that he loved you, and—oh, Lorita—that he had *never* loved any other woman!"



"I know it, Maruja—but it was idle talk—that man never really loved me—he is not capable of it."

Mary drew away from her a moment and looked at her questioningly ; and Dolores paused in what she had been saying. She had been tempted to add : "He is incapable of loving any one, and it is profaning the word to speak it with his name," but she felt that this would be useless now ; so far, opposition to Clarence Stanley had, as is usual in such cases, only increased Polly Hamilton's passion. With a half impatient sigh Dolores continued :

"What he imagined to be his love for me is simply a mania to possess the great treasure of the Mendozas—a treasure which does, indeed, belong to me if it is ever found, and which no man or woman can truly possess and keep except through its rightful owner ; but I shall never seek it. The man you are unfortunate enough to love, Maruja, sees in me simply the possessor of untold treasures, the charm of which is, perhaps, increased and exaggerated by the romantic family history of which I gave him the details. How I regret that I did so ! How I wish I had then understood myself better—as I do now. I hoped the story of the wicked and treacherous Pedro Mendoza might have been a warning to him—"

"Lorita !" interrupted Polly, reproachfully. "You are very bitter against Clarence."

"That cannot be news to you, Maruja ; you have known from the first my aversion toward Mr. Stanley."

"But I thought you had grown to like him better—to do him something more like justice, Rita—indeed, I have even thought that you—were falling in love with him, and it has troubled me greatly, and now I will say what has been in my thoughts to say more than once, dear Rita." Dolores would have interrupted her, but



Polly placed her fingers on the half-opened lips, while she continued with eager, breathless, loving imperiousness : " No, I have set out to say this thing, Rita, and I must have it off my mind ; I would never have courage another time. I have feared that you loved Clarence—it seemed so natural that any woman should love him, and it seemed more than natural that he should love you ; for how could anyone help loving you, Rita, so beautiful, so noble, and seeing you every day. I was sometimes mad with jealousy, and yet, in the very depths of my heart, Lorita, I love you so well that I would give him to you, rather than you should be unhappy. And that is what I want to say, dear, if you really love Clarence, take him ! I give him to you ! Only be frank with me ! Tell me the truth ! "

Dolores at first replied only with a look glowing with grateful affection ; but she perceived at once that she must put her feeling regarding Stanley into the plainest words, in order that Polly Hamilton might never again misunderstand it.

" Maruja, darling," she said, " how can I thank you for such a proof of your love ? It is far more than risking your precious life to save mine. I can only ask you to forgive the plain words I use in answering you. It is not merely that I do not and never could under any circumstances love Clarence Stanley—that gives no idea of my feeling in the matter—*I loathe him !* "

Mary drew away in the greatest surprise, rather than from offense.

" I cannot understand it," she said, puzzled. " I can comprehend that you might disapprove of Clarence, that you might misunderstand him or feel bitterly toward him ; but that you or any one should find him personally disagreeable ! He is the handsomest and most pleasing man I ever knew. Tell me, dear, are you



quite sure you don't mistake your own feelings? Is not such intense and bitter dislike a form of love in disguise?"

Dolores laughed outright—the merriest sound that Polly had heard for a long time—and then she said:

"It is well disguised, my dear, and I shall never be able to recognize it for anything but the most unmitigated dislike. Besides that, Maruja, I will confess to you what I had hardly dared admit to myself. I love—how shall I say it?—I love one, whom to look on only once—for I have seen him but for a fleeting moment—is to adore in an instant and forever."

"Oh, Rita, how delightful! Who is he?"

"Also I do not know; I may never see him again; I may never so much as hear his name, but I shall love him forever, and something in my deepest thoughts tells me that he loves me."

"Ah, now I am satisfied, Rita. *Now* I can understand that you cannot love Clarence. But if he loves you, Rita?"

"Trust me, dear. He does not—he never will—and when he no longer sees me, there will not be even the shadow of such a fancy to mar your happiness."

She would have said more, but she saw that any further conversation would lead to more than she now wished to say; and, rising hastily, she kissed Mary hurriedly, but with passionate tenderness. Then she hastened from the room. But, before closing the door, she came back and took Polly Hamilton once more in her arms; and the girl remembered afterward that she embraced her solemnly.

"Adieu, Maruja!" she said. "My one dear, true friend. Love me always, Maruja, and never forget me! Dear girl!"

She drew her passionately to her heart, and Polly felt



a strange sadness in that embrace, as if her friend were saying a long farewell instead of going to her room.

Scarcely had Dolores gone, when Mrs. Hamilton sought her daughter ; and if Polly had not been sunk in thought she would have seen at a glance that her mother was in a state of suppressed excitement, of a different nature from the painful anxiety which had been distressing her in regard to Polly's mysterious illness.

Now that her child had recovered from that dreadful swoon, and had been declared in no danger from any unknown illness, Mrs. Hamilton had grown comparatively calm ; and by the time her husband had returned from his customary business duties, her tranquility had so far come back that she decided to say nothing about the illness that had so alarmed her. After all, perhaps, it had been some girlish quarrel, and when she had talked it over with Dolores she would certainly feel better. Girls must be girls, and if it was a lover's quarrel, of course, Polly would tell her all about it some time. Meanwhile, she had picked up an evening paper which Mr. Hamilton had thrown on the table, and she mechanically glanced at it while counting the minutes till Dolores should leave Mary's room. Suddenly the paper rustled violently in Mrs. Hamilton's hand, and she read over and over again a certain paragraph which had caught her eye.

Now, as she entered her daughter's room, Mrs. Hamilton still had the evening paper tightly clutched in her hand, and a glance at Mary served to reassure her in regard to the trouble, whatever it might have been, which had so distressed her.

"Well, Polly, you are better, dear? What was the trouble? Was Dolores the cause of it?"

"Oh, mamma, it was all a mistake and Dolores is an



angel!" was the quick reply. "He doesn't love her. She knows that he does not. And, oh, I can't talk any more about it just now! It has nearly killed me! But I think, after all, I love Rita more than I could ever love any man."

Mrs. Hamilton smiled, and did not contradict a statement that seemed too absurd for consideration.

"The dear girl! I am sorry to have done her any injustice, Polly, and I shall tell her so. But you frightened me horribly, my darling child, and you are all I have in the world. Let us say no more, however, since there seems to have been a mistake. And now look at this, and tell me what ought to be done."

She put the evening's paper into the hand of Polly and pointed to the paragraph which she had found of such engrossing interest, and Mary read it:

"Wanted—The heir to an English earldom. The cable brings us the news, this afternoon, of the death of Lord Appleby and his only child, a beautiful and interesting boy of six years. Lord Appleby was the eldest son and heir of the Earl of Windermere. A second son, the Hon. Clarence Stanley, if still living, is now the heir to the title and estates; but nothing has been heard of him for many years, and it is supposed that he died in California, where he was last heard of. Failing an heir in the direct succession, the title and estates will pass to a distant branch of the family."

Polly dropped the paper with a sigh.

"How unfortunate!" she said.

"'Unfortunate?'" repeated Mrs. Hamilton.

"Yes, if I had thought of forgiving Clarence, I couldn't say so now; it would look too much like being bought by his title."



"What nonsense, Polly ! As if Clarence could ever mistake your motives ! Does he not know that you love him ?"

"He may have known it, mamma, hitherto, for Heaven knows I did love him—once. But my feelings have had a severe wrench, and I have been thinking deeply, for a few minutes, since Rita left me. First there was that scene with Mrs. Helmholtz, which upset me more than I cared to admit at the time."

"Nonsense, Polly !" exclaimed Mrs. Hamilton. "Are you losing your senses ? Is Clarence to blame because a half-crazy creature—you called her so yourself—imagines a resemblance between him and her dead husband ?"

"And I heard him making love to Rita. She declares he didn't mean it, but I heard his words all the same ; and though she repulsed him, and she *did* repulse him, and *she loathes him !* Now, mamma, you know there must be something very wrong about a man when a girl like Rita says that she loathes him."

Mrs. Hamilton felt herself ready to choke with the revulsion of feeling caused by these inexplicable words, and finding language inadequate to express the chaotic condition of her mind, she was reduced to silence.

But this could not continue. She felt that she must speak before Polly should give utterance to something yet more incomprehensible, and, by a happy chance, she remembered Doctor Macdonald's prescription.

"My dear," she said, "you have had a trying day, and I think you are feverish. I will go to prepare the medicine the doctor ordered. You know you promised to take it."

And Polly drank the bitter stuff, making many wry faces as she did so ; and Mrs. Hamilton put her to bed



and tucked her in as she had done when she was a little child, and then she sat by her till she fell asleep.

After that she talked over with her husband the foreign news which had so interested her, and incidentally she mentioned that there had been "some mysterious kind of a quarrel" between the lovers.

"And Polly is mighty cool about it," she concluded, "and perhaps it is just as well she is, for it will teach Lord Clarence Stanley a lesson. But that is no reason why *we*, you and I, my dear, should not write to Clarence and offer our congratulations."

"Congratulations!" laughed Mr. Hamilton, "congratulate a man on the death of his nearest relatives?"

"Very well, then—condolences!" said Mrs. Hamilton. "But what is the use of humbug? We know how they all hate each other in that family. But to send a message to Clarence will be sure to bring him here, and if Polly once sees him she will forgive him as soon as he asks her."

"All right," said Mr. Hamilton, with easy good nature. "Suppose I go over to the hotel and call on Clarence? That will be the best way, and incidentally I'll tell him I have something about this Chicago business to talk with him about to-morrow."

"Just the thing!" assented Mrs. Hamilton. And when her husband had started on this mission, she gave herself up to dreams of the future glory of the young Countess of Windermere.





## CHAPTER XXIV.

### LOVE'S MARTYRDOM.

Mary Hamilton said truly when she told her mother that she had experienced a revulsion of feeling in regard to Clarence Stanley ; but wishing to spare the heart that had even loved her entirely, she had not told all the truth. She had, indeed, been shocked and horrified by the words she had heard him speak to Dolores ; and she had, insensibly, thought a score of things too terrible to put into form in regard to the apparent recognition of him by Madame Helmholtz. Had he, in years past, met that beautiful woman and wooed her under an assumed name ? Could it be possible that in a moment of infatuation he had even gone so far as to marry her, and afterward, learning the mistake he had made, had he repudiated her ? Or had he supposed her dead and so, believing himself free, had he felt himself at liberty to love and marry again ? Such things happened in stories, as Polly knew, though she was not much given to reading them, and they happened in real life, too, as she also knew, for the newspapers constantly gave accounts of just such things and of frightful domestic tragedies in consequence of them ! She shuddered with horror at these thoughts, and forcibly thrust them from her, as the grotesque chimeras of her own excited imagination.



But now, spurred by the remembrance of that interview of which she had been a witness ; maddened by the recollection of the passionate avowal to which she had listened—all these thoughts came trooping back, and brought many new ones, and the poor girl's heart throbbed and burned with pain, and her very soul seemed torn with throes of anguish. And above all was the agony of wasted love and an unconquerable jealousy that ate into the very springs of her being and never ceased to whisper :

“ He loves Dolores—he loves Dolores ! And he has *never* really loved you.”

It was well enough for Dolores to insist that Stanley did not love her—that his avowal was prompted merely by his passion for money and his desire to gain possession of the mysterious and wonderful Mendoza treasure ! But the tones of his voice still rang in Polly's ears, and the passionate intensity with which he had declared his love was in striking and very painful contrast to the tranquil and common-place manner that had ever characterized his love-making to herself. And then, with a bitter sense of humiliation, Mary remembered how, for nearly two years past, Clarence Stanley had been an intimate of her family—coming and going as he chose, never declaring himself her lover and formally asking her in marriage after the manner of other men, and yet constantly devoted in such a way as to keep all others aloof until their engagement was finally accepted as a matter of course by outsiders. How like now, by the light of recent events, this looked to the conduct of a man who had been calmly calculating chances ; and who had, at last, been driven by force of circumstances, rather than by any ardor of feeling, into an avowal of attachment.

All the evening, after her mother had left her—for



her sleep was soon over—and far into the night, Mary Hamilton reviewed her acquaintance with Clarence Stanley ; and much that had so often seemed strange, even to her partial judgment, showed all too clearly now—but in dark and lurid colors.

“ Oh, Rita ! Rita ! ” groaned the unhappy girl, writhing in pain so great that it was worse to endure than physical suffering. “ Is it you whom I have loved above all other women except my mother—is it you, dear Rita, that has brought me this great sorrow ? For it is idle to conceal from myself that the bitterest drop in this most bitter cup is the knowledge that Clarence loves Rita and has never loved me ! And I had so dreamed of a great love—a deep, intense, still, undying affection—a love, whose very depth and steadfastness would have been at once awful and beautiful. It was such a love that I felt for him. And I thought his love for me was the same. I cheated myself with the hope that this tranquil appearance of tenderness only indicated the depth and intensity of his nature. I did not think him capable of a sudden, uncontrollable outbreak of passionate adoration such as he expressed to Rita. And, oh, what avails it to tell me that it was but momentary and that he did not mean it ? I heard his words, I saw his face ; and never can I forget the tones of his voice or the ardent fire of his looks ! Oh, Rita ! Rita ! That it should be you—*you*, to break my heart ! You, who saved my life, to crush it with a death so far more cruel than the trampling of horses over my mangled body ! Why, why did you interpose to save me for this misery ? Clarence, Clarence, love of my life, why did I not die then, believing in you and never doubting your truth and honor ? ”

Again and again, through the weary watches of the night, did these thoughts, in every conceivable varia-



tion, chase each other through this poor girl's tortured fancy, till, quite worn out, at last she fell asleep from exhaustion ; but not until another and yet sadder day had already begun to dawn.

It was late in the morning, and the household had already breakfasted, when Mary Hamilton awoke to that poignant realization of ever-present suffering which comes like a dagger-thrust on first returning to wakefulness after bitter sorrow. She woke with a long-drawn, moaning sigh—a sound which struck, like a blow, her mother, who was standing beside the bed, waiting for the dear eyes she loved to uncloset.

“Oh, mamma !” exclaimed Polly, with a rush of recollection which sent the tears to her eyes ; and then, catching the distressed look on Mrs. Hamilton's face, the daughter bravely smiled through her tears, though with a sinking heart, for she saw in one swift glance a new and utterly desperate sorrow in her mother's face.

“How soundly I have slept !” she exclaimed, with an affectation of entire forgetfulness of the past night and all its suffering. “It is long since I have slept so late in the morning. Perhaps I shall actually become a fashionable girl at last and sleep as late as Bertha Seton. But what is the matter, mamma, dear ? You look troubled about something. No accident to any one, I hope ?”

Mrs. Hamilton did not immediately respond. This affectation of cheerfulness on the part of her daughter did not deceive her. She was keenly aware of the dark circles around Mary's heavy eye, the pathetic pallor of her usually bright and laughing face, and she knew not how to break with sufficient gentleness and care a piece of news which she quite feared to tell and yet felt that she alone could tell to her heart-broken child. It was with an answering moan of suffering and sorrow that



she at first replied to Mary's words, at which the latter, unable any longer to disguise her own anxiety, exclaimed in a voice of piercing entreaty :

"What has happened, mamma? What new misfortune has come upon us? Has any harm come to Clarence? Is he ill? Is he dead?"

"Would to heaven that he had been dead before you ever saw his false and treacherous face!" exclaimed Mrs. Hamilton, bitterly.

"Ah! Then he is *not* dead! Thank God for that!" cried Mary, as she suddenly sat up in bed, as if that very thought had brought renewed life and strength.

Mrs. Hamilton realized more acutely than before how her child's very life seemed wrapped in the welfare of the man who had, as she now felt convinced, horribly and cruelly deceived them all from the very first day.

"Since Clarence is not dead," Mary went on, with forced calmness and quite oblivious of the fact that she had but a few hours ago expressed almost entire indifference to him, "nothing can be so very bad. Is he ill, then? Has any accident happened to him?"

"So far as I know, he is well and safe. He is sure to take exceedingly good care of himself at all times, and more especially now since he has become Lord Stanley and the heir to an earldom," said Mrs. Hamilton, her words and tones unconsciously betraying increased bitterness. "It is not of Lord Stanley that I have come to speak, Polly, dear. At least, not of him first. Dolores has—"

"Rita!" exclaimed Mary, sharply, a strange mixture of relief and alarm in her voice. "Oh, mamma, dear, no harm has come to Rita?"

Mrs. Hamilton sank helplessly into a chair, and, without knowing what she did, crushed and crumpled a letter which she had been holding in her hand. Since



the early years of her married life, when she had lost her first children, she had not known such grief as now beset her, and she was bewildered by the suddenness of it, for she neither knew how to bear her own share of it nor yet how to help Polly to bear hers. It was a new and very bitter kind of grief.

"Mamma," cried Mary, "why do you not answer me? What has happened to Lorita? Is she dead Has she killed herself?"

"No harm has come to her," answered Mrs. Hamilton, with smiling and bitter contempt. "You dear, innocent child! No one is sacrificing life or comfort to spare you, though you would have died for either of them. Dolores is neither dead nor ill nor dying. She has simply eloped. That's all."

"'Eloped!'" repeated the girl, stupidly, as though the word possessed no meaning for her. "'Eloped!' And with whom!"

"Aye, with whom? That is the question. But there can be little doubt now as to the companion of her flight. She is gone, and he is gone, too, and the natural inference is, after what took place yesterday, that they have gone together. Dolores, the girl of whom you made a sister—the girl whom I treated as a daughter and loved next to yourself—has eloped with the man who was betrothed to you. Clarence Stanley and Dolores have gone together."

"I'll never believe it!" exclaimed Mary Hamilton. "I could not believe it! No, not if she stood here before me and confessed the perfidy with her own lips. She is all truth and honor. Clarence may—yes, although I have adored him—I will admit that Clarence Stanley *may* be false; but Dolores—never!"

"You are infatuated about that girl," said Mrs. Ham-



ilton, unable to suppress a jealous pang. "I believe you love her more than you love me."

Mary, who had slipped from the bed and hastily thrown on a wrapper and thrust her white feet into slippers, drew an ottoman close to her mother; and, sinking down upon it, with her hands resting on her mother's knee, now looked up with a face full of confident love.

"No, darling mamma, not better; that would be impossible," she murmured. "But almost as well; and better, perhaps, than I could have loved a real sister, had Heaven given me one. I cannot believe any ill of Dolores. If ever a perfectly true, pure spirit was sent on earth to do good to all who came within her influence, it is Dolores. To lose her love and to lose my faith in her would be more than I could bear now, along with everything else."

Mrs. Hamilton smothered an impatient sigh. She could not comprehend her daughter's devotion to this stranger, now that Dolores was, without doubt, proved her rival, and also her successful rival; for Mrs. Hamilton had reasons, not yet given to Polly, for feeling quite convinced that Dolores had grossly imposed on those who had in every way sought to befriend her.

"Tell me all there is to tell about Dolores," Mary continued, after a few moment's silence.

"It is little enough, but it means a great deal," said Mrs. Hamilton. "Frances, the girl who specially waited on her, gave me this letter but an hour ago. Read it for yourself."

She hurriedly smoothed out the crumpled paper and gave it into her daughter's tremulous hands.

For a moment Polly hesitated before reading this letter. What did it contain, this potent slip of paper that had meant so much to her mother? Would the



words there written forever crush her confidence in both friend and lover? Oh, how bitter life was becoming! Was there no truth, no loyalty in woman, no chivalry nor honor left in man? Was the whole world a cruel lie?

Then, with characteristic decision and the determination of real strength to know the worst at once, Polly Hamilton read the letter, and found that it did, indeed, "mean a great deal," as her mother had said; but not in the same sense as that in which Mrs. Hamilton had meant the words.

The note had been addressed to Mrs. Hamilton, not to Polly; and had the anxious and perplexed mother read it at another time, when her mind had been unclouded by the bitterness of grief and disappointment, she could not have so entirely misunderstood the writer.

This was what Dolores had written:

"To you who have treated me as kindly, as generously as if I had been your own child, though I came to you a stranger, and almost a waif out of the streets, I write these farewell words rather than to our dear Polly, because I hope that you will understand them and think that what I am doing is the best and only way. Mr. Stanley, who is, as I believe, more truly attached to Polly than to any one else—Darling Polly! Who could help loving her? Even such men as Clarence Stanley appreciate the love of pure, good women, such as my dearly loved Maruja—But I will not offend you by speaking against him. As I was going to say, Mr. Stanley imagines for a moment that he loves me. Perhaps he does not even imagine it, but only hoped to flatter an inexperienced young woman by a pretended passion in order to obtain the Mendoza treasure; but even if he was sincere in his protestations of love for



*me*, he deludes himself ; and the influence I have so unintentionally thrown over him will vanish as suddenly as it came when he no longer sees me. For that reason I am going away, now, without even saying good-bye to any of you, because I know that Maruja would protest against it, and the object of my departure would be lost if any one could trace me. In the happy future that will come to Marjua—dear, sweet little sister, as I love to think of her—I will some day send her news of myself ; and, in the meantime, let no one be anxious about me. The generous allowance you have insisted on paying me for Polly's Spanish lessons provides me with more money than I shall need, and I have made an engagement with an old friend of mamma's happy youth, who is returning to California, and who needs a governess for her two little girls. I heard of her a couple of weeks ago, and would have spoken of her then, but thought best not to do so, for I had thought of taking this step some time ago— How I wish now that I had done so ! I feared, but did not wish to believe in the nature of Mr. Stanley's feelings toward me ! I had a horror of misunderstanding the whole situation, and also of being misunderstood, for it seemed to me very silly and vain to suppose myself the object of attention from a man who was engaged to another girl, and especially one so good and lovely as Polly Hamilton. I go now, however, and I can only say again how I wish I had gone sooner ; and again a thousand times how I love and thank you all for your goodness to a friendless, unknown, lonely girl.

“DOLORES.”

Mary looked up with moistened eyes and quivering lips when she had finished reading the letter.

“How can you doubt Lorita, mamma ? How can you imagine that she has gone away with Clarence ? It is



a heart-breaking letter to me. The effort to be calm and self-possessed when she was suffering torture ! The attempt at formal phrases, that you might not guess how much the writing of that letter cost her ! Oh, it is the most pathetic thing I ever read !”

“I cannot see any pathos in it at all, Polly. It is extremely well-considered, and strikes me as the composition of an experienced woman of the world.”

Polly almost laughed.

“‘An experienced woman of the world !’ ” she repeated. “My guileless Lorita ! You might as well apply the words to an angel. But the whole manner and tone of the letter only prove to me the constraint that Rita had put on her feelings to make her write like that. Oh, to have her leave me like this ! It is worse even than—than—the other grief ! How did she go ? Where has she gone ? Alone and friendless in this cruel world ; perhaps as destitute and even more unhappy than when she first came to us.”

“But she has money, Polly. What she says is true about that. Both your father and I gave her all the money she would accept, under the pretense of those Spanish lessons. And you furnished her wardrobe ; so that she had no occasion to spend a dollar for anything in all these months. It is true she has taken nothing with her, except such things as were gifts, especially from you ; and Frances says she selected everything you had chosen or had admired when she wore it. All the rest remain—”

“Oh, Mamma ! And doesn’t that show !” interrupted Mary.

“But it will be easy for Lord Clarence Stanley to give his wife a *trousseau*,” said Mrs. Hamilton, with contemptuous insistence. “You don’t consider that they have gone together. Last night, your father, after





"OH, CARLOS! MY CARLOS!" CELESTINE EXCLAIMED.—See Page 183.







reading the news I told you of, went to the hotel to call on Clarence, and—he was gone ! Gone and no news of him to explain why, or where he had betaken himself ; for when your father made inquiries he could only ascertain that orders had been given to forward all letters to the previous address in Chicago, and the carriage engaged to convey him and his luggage had left him at the depot, where he was to take the train for the West.”

“But, mamma—” began Polly Hamilton, and then paused abruptly, unable to proceed.

She had tried to bear this final blow to all the hopes she had unconsciously cherished with courage sufficient, at least, to disguise her suffering from her mother ; but it was too much at first, and she could not command her voice. She had been pale enough before, but now every vestige of color forsook her face and she was like a wilted snowdrop as her head fell forward on her mother's knee, and she could only sob forth :

“Oh, mamma, mamma ! Then he has gone ! He has really left me, and he will not return ! He thinks I cannot forgive the words I heard him speak to Dolores, and he does not care enough to try. Oh, Clarence ! Clarence ! How shall I bear the loss of you ? Rita ! Rita ! Why have you left me ?”

Mrs. Hamilton could only wring her hands in misery. She dare not say anything further of what she still believed to be the heartless treachery of Dolores ; indeed, she blamed herself that she had said so much ; but, though cruel, it was surely the truest kindness that Polly should know the truth. She drew the girl's head to her heart, and holding her there, she wept with her, and said with all the comfort she could find :

“Be a brave girl ! Your mother loves you, darling—your mother and your father. We are still the truest friends and we will never betray you.”





## CHAPTER XXV.

### MASTER AND SLAVE.

After leaving Olive Gaye, Clarence Stanley returned to his hotel and made somewhat ostentatious preparations for a journey. Having then paid his bill, he was driven, with his luggage, to the depot, with all possible haste, to get the first train for Chicago; but before boarding the train he changed his mind, congratulating himself, with a smile, that he had not yet bought his ticket, and was hurriedly driven in an entirely different direction and to a part of the town in no way resembling the fashionable street in which he had been living for some weeks.

All this had occupied several hours, and although he had been very busy, Lord Clarence had, notwithstanding, given a good deal of thought to the possible future as it now loomed up in the distance and to the lady who had elected to share that future with him. He was rapidly acquiring an unbounded admiration for the mental resources and executive ability of Miss Olive Gaye; and although he had, at first, chafed under the rage and humiliation of finding himself outwitted and mastered by a woman, he gradually ceased to suffer from these feelings, and by identifying himself with his future companion he soon came to think of her cleverness with



great complacency as a part of his own. Had not Olive said that "she would tell Toddlekens that they were one?" And Clarence felt that such a statement would be in every way correct.

"By Jove's thunder," he thought, "she is worth all the rest of the women put together! We shall make a team! It will be worth while to run in harness with a girl like that, and it will be sure betting on the pair of us."

He had just reached this satisfactory conclusion when the carriage stopped in front of a tumble-down tenement-house, and without asking any questions Stanley directed the coachman to carry up his luggage to a room on the second floor, where he found, as he knew he should, Henri Van Tassel, in a state of stupefaction at his sudden appearance.

"Don't profess to be surprised, old man," said the new-comer, in his pleasantest manner. "You must have known I was liable to turn up here any day, and don't give me such a frigid welcome, or I might make the mistake of supposing that you were not glad to see me," and, indeed, to judge by the face of the unhappy Van Tassel, no one would suppose such an idea a mistaken one.

The professor's appearance was cadaverous from apprehension; but in the depths of his soul there was comfort. It came from the memory of Dolores; the rose, faded, withered now, which she had thrown to him in answer to the prayer for help from his despairing heart, was still redolent of promise and of comfort. From that night he had determined that if ever Stanley endeavored to influence him by mesmeric power to the commission of any evil deed, he would fly to Dolores for protection, and by the power for good—the atmosphere of purity and holiness that seemed to emanate from her



—he felt that he should be saved. Though terrified by this sudden invasion, he felt strengthened by the memory of Dolores, and he replied, with a faint semblance of spirit, that his pleasure at this unexpected visit was by no means as great as his surprise.

Stanley merely smiled ; and in view of the manner in which he had treated, earlier in the day, his newly-acquired library of occult science, he determined to use such knowledge as he possessed from what he would have described as the common-sense standpoint. By this, he meant that he would watch his opportunity to throw Van Tassel into the mesmeric trance ; a process which he believed consisted merely in the use of his own stronger will ; and when that was accomplished, he would compel him to obey his commands.

But he did not find this so easy a task as it had hitherto been ; and he fumed within himself at this difficulty. He remembered with dismay the strong resisting force, perfectly inexplicable to him (and which forever remained inexplicable) that had protected Dolores from his influence. Was that mysterious force now opposing him again ? Could it be true that the guardian angels of pure souls did really protect them in moments of great peril ? And Henri Van Tassel was by nature a pure spirit, although weakness, both physical and mental, too often left him at the mercy of strong, evil, unscrupulous persons such as his present companion, who now answered his own thought by a contemptuous smile and a scornful shrug of his fine, broad shoulders.

“Poor old Van !” thought Clarence, watching his reluctant host. “He has no guardian angel ; and in a few minutes he will be my obedient slave as usual.”

“I am only going to trespass on your hospitality for a day or two, old man,” he said, aloud, with that air of



good-fellowship which he had always found most effectual in dealing with Van Tassel. "I had actually started to leave town, but felt that I must see you once again, if only to provide for your future, before I say farewell forever to this eastern portion of the continent. The climate doesn't agree with me. I pine for the free air of the prairies and the seclusion of remote, untraveled canyons. What these Eastern braggadocios have the cheek to call 'the wild and woolly West' suits me right down to the ground; and to-morrow or next day I shall start for Chicago, and thence, as the fancy takes me, to the shores of our glorious Pacific."

Van Tassel instantly looked up at the self-invited guest with an expression of relief on his pallid countenance; and Stanley continued, as he drew from his pocket a liberal roll of gold and bank-notes:

"And this is for you after I am gone. I know you think me an incorrigible scamp, Van, but it is no news now that the devil was never so black as he has been painted, and so with me. I think of you, old man, bad as I am. Now, take this boodle and lock it up carefully, for when I am gone, I guess you will have seen the back of your last friend."

Van Tassel answered by a grateful look, and, gathering up the money, he tied it securely in a chamois-leather bag and put it into an inner-pocket, saying:

"There is no safer place here. Of course, I may be robbed and murdered for it; but if I am that will put an end to the whole story so far as I am concerned, and I am tired enough to welcome death in almost any form."

Stanley watched him, making no answer to his words, but with his gaze fixed upon him, till Van Tassel, under the influence of that strange, compelling, magnetic glance, suddenly sank into a chair, all collapsed, and



once more, like the ill-fated bird beneath the fascination of the rattlesnake, sat helplessly looking into the eyes of his master. Stanley slightly smiled, and, without even the form of the waving passes of his hands, continued to look straight into the fascinated eyes of his victim till the latter's head dropped on his breast, and he was fast asleep.

"Are you ready to obey me?" asked Stanley.

"Not ready, but I must obey you," said the reluctant voice.

"The time has come to use the dagger. Is it ready?"

A strong shudder shook the wretched man till he seemed in danger of falling from his chair; but the effort at resistance was useless, and as soon as it had passed he answered in choking gasps:

"I have a dagger! It will serve! It has been used before! It is there!"

He pointed to the miserable cot-bed on which he slept, and Stanley understood from the gesture that the dagger was concealed in the mattress. He was now so sure of his victim that he scarcely listened to his replies, knowing that Van Tassel must assent to everything he said; and with only a glance to see that he was obeyed, he now ordered him to get the dagger and conceal it on his person. The sleeper rose and went toward the bed and, with the perfect accuracy of the somnambulist, instantly found the weapon and, putting it in his pocket, sat down on the edge of the cot.

"Now you will accompany me when I leave here, presently, and I will take you to the door of Celestine's house. You are her brother, remember, and that will admit you to her presence at once. She is alone tonight; the baron does not return till a late hour. Jealous though he is, he leaves her much alone; but, perhaps, he has an object in that. The one thing that



concerns you, however, is that he will be absent to-night. If she refuses to see you, say that you are sent by Carlos. That will be enough. With what she now knows and what she suspects, she would go through fire to speak with you. You will be shown directly into her presence. Have the dagger ready. The instant you stand before her, plunge the dagger into her heart. You hear and understand?"

"Too well—too well!" groaned the sleeper, whose torpid conscience once more strove to arouse itself in order to fight against the will of the fiendish mind that controlled it. But the effort was vain. The unhappy wretch wrung his hands and groveled for mercy; but Stanley continued inexorably:

"You will obey?"

"I obey—I obey!" groaned the victim.

Stanley paused a few moments, watching Van Tassel; and when the latter seemed tranquil and without any further effort to struggle against his stronger influence, he made a few upward passes before his face and bade him awake.

The professor opened his eyes and gazed at him, pale and terrified.

"Don't look so scared, old man," Stanley said gayly; "I was only trying if I had lost the power. I don't believe in it, you know, but there's a kind of fascination in trying it on occasionally. I read all the rubbish in that pile of books you brought me, and it has given me quite a good opinion of my own headpiece. If I weren't pretty sound and strong, the occult science I have imbibed in the course of the past few weeks would have given me softening of the brain. However, Van, this is my last experiment on you. After I am gone, perhaps you will want to turn an honest penny now and then in getting up an entertainment by Professor



Van Tassel. You can do it, I dare say. Leave liquor and opium alone, and all your power may, perhaps, come back."

Van Tassel listened in a dazed manner. The one idea that came to his befogged intelligence, out of all that Stanley said, was the latter's promise that he would not mesmerize him again and the blissful information that he was about to leave the city forever. With his knowledge of the dangerous and awful possibilities of hypnotism, he knew that the effect of all that he had bade him do, and of all he might yet will to have him do, would gradually wear off when he was absent and removed entirely from the same sphere in which he moved; and he clung to the hope that he might occasionally see Dolores and win from her the help of a superior order of mind. But, for the present, he knew himself to be utterly in the power of Clarence Stanley, and he made no further effort at resistance.

Stanley rose and walked about the room, and opening a door at the farther side, found that it opened into another small apartment, meagerly furnished with a table, a couple of chairs and a dilapidated sofa.

"This is not a luxurious den of yours, Van," he said; "but no matter. I have been used to roughing it in my day, and I can sleep anywhere. That old lounge will do for me, and, in the meantime, I invite you to dine with me. I have been so busy all day that I forgot about it, but now I feel quite hollow. Come along; a good dinner will replenish the inner man and improve the looks of the outward man."

And catching up his hat and cane from the chair on which he had placed them he moved toward the door.

Van Tassel looked about for his hat, and having found it put it on and mechanically followed Stanley out into the street.



Though a comparative stranger in New York, Stanley had made good use of his time, and he possessed a special talent for learning a city by heart. He led the way directly to an obscure but good restaurant ; and, having fed his companion thoroughly and also dined well himself he seized him familiarly by the arm and walked up-town, apparently with no object except to while away the time. They had walked for more than an hour when a church-clock in the distance struck the hour of ten. Stanley took no heed of the time, and apparently Van Tassel had not observed the striking of the clock. He was listening to the conversation of his companion who had cast aside his *rôle* of Clarence Stanley, and for the furtherance of his purpose, was deep in certain reminiscences of their first acquaintance—the days when Van Tassel had been the prosperous and wonderful Professor Van Tassel, manager of the great clairvoyant and mind-reader, Mlle. Celestine.

“And here,” said Stanley, suddenly pausing before an imposing mansion, the windows of which, on the second story, were brilliantly lighted, “in this very house now lives like a princess, that same Celestine ; while you, her devoted brother, to whom she owes everything in the world, life itself, stand here an out-cast and little better than a tramp.”

“What—Celestine ?” gasped Van Tassel, turning deathly pale and pressing his hands to his brow, while he leaned for support against the railing of the steps that led up to the door. For some moments he seemed overcome as with faintness or dizziness, and Stanley trembled for the success of his great experiment.

Would he obey literally or would the attempt be a failure ?

Suddenly Van Tassel drew himself up and made an



effort to walk on, but his feet seemed glued to the pavement ; he could not move from the spot.

"Celestine !" he muttered, in a voice of anguish. "What is this horror that has come upon me ? Celestine ! My little sister—I loved her always—why should I harm her ? No, no, no ! I cannot raise my hand against Celestine !"

"*You must !*" whispered Stanley, in his ear, like the voice of Satan. "She has treated you vilely, and deserves to die !"

"*'To die !'*" repeated Van Tassel, like an echo ; and instinctively his hand sought the dagger in his breast-pocket, and a cruel, angry light gleamed in his wild eyes."

"*'To die !'*" he said again. "Yes, if I can reach her—I shall reach her—but I must be cunning, cunning ; or she won't admit me ; but I have the pass-word. Carlos ! Carlos ! Ha—ha ! That will bring me to her if she had to wade through fire ! *He* said so, and he knows—he knows !"

With a bound like a panther he suddenly sprang up the steps, and Stanley heard the echo of the furious ringing of the bell.

"It works—it works !" he thought. "I couldn't believe it if I hadn't heard it and seen it for myself : but I must get out of this ; I dare not be seen about here."

He hastened rapidly along the street and did not pause for breath till he had turned the corner into the adjoining avenue. There he slowed his steps and walked loiteringly along for more than a block, and then turning about he walked slowly back again.

"It will take but a few minutes," he thought, in fierce excitement, though outwardly careless. "He cannot stop now that he has started. He is like a madman let



loose, and he will use the cunning of a madman. But I must give him time—there will be an instant alarm, perhaps a chase, and he may be captured on the instant, for, the deed once over, he will know nothing and be quite unable to explain or defend himself. It will be set down as the meaningless freak of a lunatic.”

As Stanley's thoughts reached this point, he had again arrived at the corner of the street and looked along toward the house into which he had seen Van Tassel vanish. He now saw him come trembling and tottering down the steps again, confronted by a figure that seemed hastening toward him. Stanley was several hundred yards away, but he was sure that figure was a woman's and in the tall, slender shape a something, strangely, subtly familiar, struck on all his senses and sent an electric thrill through and through him, till the very tips of his fingers throbbed in response to it.

He could not move, but he stood there, watching, and he saw Van Tassel seize the girl's hands.

“I may now touch you?” said Van Tassel, in a voice hoarse and tremulous with excitement, but yet vibrant with joy and triumph and unutterable thankfulness. “My hands are clean. Look! Look! There is no blood on them. One ray of light came to me, and I prayed to God for help. Yes, I cried upon Him to send some angel to aid me, and He has sent you. Let me go with you. Let me follow you to the end of the earth. I will be your servant, your slave; but do not send me away from you. Save me! Save me!”

Dolores answered gently:

“Come with me, then. You shall be my brother.”

She would have drawn him forward, but Van Tassel whispered hurriedly:

“Not that way! *He* is there. Oh, let me never see him again! Protect me always!”



"This way, then," answered Dolores ; and they walked away together in the direction whence she had come.

But at the sight of them disappearing together, Stanley recovered from the panic which had overtaken him. He darted forward, and as he plunged ahead like some wild animal after its prey, he found himself face to face with a man who had also rushed down the same steps by which Van Tassel had descended, and who was now white and furious, glaring about him from side to side.

"The husband !" thought Stanley. "That fool has done the deed, then, and there will presently be a hue-and-cry after the murderer. I cannot pursue him now, And why should I ? If he escapes so much the better."

He wheeled about and rushed in the other direction, while Baron von Helmholtz, glaring after him, took a few steps in pursuit, then turned and looked back at the vanishing figures of Van Tassel and Dolores.

"Which of these men ?" muttered the jealous and infuriated husband. "Where have I seen that handsome villain, with the beauty of Lucifer and more than his wickedness ? Ha—it must be he ! A lover ! A former husband ! She wouldn't waste a look on the other ! Fool that I am, I have lost them both !"

He returned to his house, and having locked the street-door he sat down heavily on the carved seat that stood against the wall. With a groan he glanced at a crumpled paper which he held in one hand, and then his gaze wandered to a slender, sharp-pointed dagger which he held in the other. A spasm as of pain contracted his heavy features, a lurid light burned in his eyes, and he set his thick lips tight and hard together ; then with the blade of a dagger he smoothed out the creases of the paper, and read once more words that were already seared into his brain :



“Be on your guard. Your wife is deceiving you. Her former husband is not dead. He lives in this city, and they have met more than once and will meet again. Be warned. A friend sends this message.”

““Her former husband!”” said Von Helmholtz, grinding the words between his teeth. “He seeks my life, then! Ah, we shall see! And this dagger, no doubt, was for me.”

He held it up and, turning it about curiously, looked at it carefully from the handle to the point; and presently on the gleaming steel he saw the letters of a name. He started up and held it close under the light of the brilliant hall-gas, and there he read these two words:

“CARLOS MENDOZA.”



## CHAPTER XXVI.

### A MYSTERIOUS TRAGEDY—ALMOST.

When Stanley returned to his self-appointed quarters at the wretched home of Van Tassel, he confidently expected—notwithstanding the sudden and inexplicable appearance of Dolores in the late scene of the drama that had been taking place—that the professor would presently come back. But as hour after hour passed, and Van Tassel did not return, he flung himself down on the lounge, dressed as he was; and, notwithstanding the noises of the street and the unsavory surroundings generally, he was soon in a profound slumber.

The cow-boy experiences of his early life, and the



atmosphere of danger in which he had lived for years until he became the Hon. Clarence Stanley, in short, had prepared him for all sorts of disturbing experiences; and, as he had often boasted to Van Tassel, it was not easy to "phaze" him. His training showed itself now, at the close of a day which might, certainly, have unsettled the nerves of the coolest adventurer. But he prided himself on his "nerve," and the more essential it was to possess that often useful quality the more he felt himself rise to the occasion; and when he awoke it was late in the morning. A glance showed him that he was still undisputed possessor of the professor's apartment.

"Where the devil has the old boy fled to?" he thought. "As we say in England, he has 'funked it'—I must remember to be very English now! But that pretty little fiend, Olive Gaye, will help me out with that sort of thing—Jove! What a girl! And by thunder! I have forgotten that she expected me back again last evening to dinner—confound it! But it was impossible anyway. I will get some breakfast and call on her at once. I mistrust she'll make me walk a chalk line for awhile—but I'll be patient till she's my wife, and if she doesn't find me a match for her then—for, as clever as she is, I am quite unacquainted with the future Earl of Windermere or the present Lord Clarence Stanley."

While these reflections, partly in silent thought and partly in broken snatches of remark, were passing through Stanley's mind, he was performing a hasty morning toilet—a matter which the professor's limited conveniences rendered difficult.

"Van's appointments are certainly not luxurious," he continued, filling a cracked basin with very stale water from a ewer minus a handle and the remains of a mouth-piece that was suggestive of a broken nose. "For an English gentleman's 'bawth' this is decidedly some-



thing of a makeshift. What does the professor do with the generous supplies of money I have given him in the past few weeks? He can't have spent it all on opium and scientific books; perhaps he has been laying up a little nest-egg for a rainy day. And that reminds me he had a pocketful of gold and notes when we went out together last night; if he has been caught by the police, his object in committing the murder would be set down to robbery. That is all right, and just as it should be. He would be dazed and helpless to that degree that he may pass for a crank or an irresponsible lunatic! But, stay; that was certainly Dolores Mendoza with whom he disappeared? How in the name of Satan's imps did she come there? And where has she taken him? Was there a row at the Hamilton house after I came away? Like enough. Poor little Polly! Of all the women I have known, she alone has loved me truly. Celestine was a jealous fury, and, though beautiful as a picture, shallow, tiresome and heartless. Olive Gaye is clever, ambitious, unscrupulous, interesting, but a sly little devil and deep as the bottomless pit. Dolores! Oh, confound that girl! She is maddening! Her face haunts me. Her voice, her touch, the very air she breathes is intoxicating! I could have loved that woman! Yes, devil and scoundrel as the good folk of this world would call me, I could have loved that woman. For her sake, I could have preferred heaven to—well, to the other place, whatever or wherever it may be. But, where the mischief has she taken Van Tassel? He is mad about her and will tell her everything. My precious life may be in danger, and here I am dawdling away the minutes."

He hurriedly completed his preparations for the street, glanced at his luggage, not even unstrapped yet, and at once decided to get new quarters, whether Van



Tassel had returned or not, when he should have come back again after breakfast.

A strange and very unusual feeling of depression took possession of Stanley when he found himself in the street, and he glanced about in a furtive manner, but without knowing he did so. If he had been an imaginative man, he might have supposed that something was going to happen or that the web of his evil life was beginning to close around him. But as a matter of fact, he did not think himself a "very bad sort," as he would have expressed it. He belonged to the large contingent that is fond of justifying itself on the rare occasions when conscience speaks, and, could he have been brought face to face with his own character in its worst aspects, he would have been first astonished and then indignant that he should be called to account for faults entailed on him by hereditary predisposition. At the present moment, his thought was that after all the wretched squalor of the neighborhood and of Van Tassel's apartment had been too much for him.

"And no wonder!" he laughed. "Blood will tell. And notwithstanding his wild-West experiences, Lord Clarence Stanley is a born aristocrat and begins to pine for the marble walls and princely magnificence of his ancestors, now that they really belong to him."

He quickened his steps, turning into a street that after a little winding, brought him at once into a better neighborhood, and then he directed his course to the restaurant where he had dined with Van Tassel; but he gave much less time than usual to his breakfast. The morning paper, which he glanced over while waiting for coffee and rolls, did not give him the satisfaction that he had anticipated, and it was a distinct disappointment when he saw that an unknown man had rung the bell at the house of Baron Helmholtz, with the evi-



dent intention of committing some act of violence against some member of the family—doubtless the beautiful Baroness Helmholtz, whom he had asked for as “Celestine.”

“The man is evidently a crank or, it may be an escaped lunatic,” the article continued, “for when the terrified servant refused to carry his message, he drew a dagger from his breast-pocket and, flourishing it wildly, declared that he must, and would, see the baroness ; because he had come from Carlos, Carlos, whom she adored ! He then turned away, and muttering what sounded like a prayer for help, exclaimed : ‘ God, God, pity me ! Send some angel to free me from the devil who pursues me ! ’ At this, the servant, who felt instinctively that she had a madman to deal with, fled upstairs, shrieking to her mistress to be on her guard and to lock her door before the lunatic could get to her. At the same moment, Baron von Helmholtz, who had just entered the house unknown to the servant, came hastily from the back drawing-room into the hall ; but was only in time to see the would-be assassin rushing from the house. Baron Helmholtz pursued the man into the street, but, on arriving there, he saw a man and woman disappearing in one direction and another man standing irresolutely near the corner of the street, in the other direction. Uncertain what to do, he returned to the house and sent a telephone alarm to the nearest police-station. But no trace of the lunatic has been found, and no clue to what may have been his intentions in regard to the beautiful baroness, who remains, happily, unharmed, and not even alarmed at what looks very like an attempt on her life.”

Stanley was not prepared for the feeling of bitter disappointment that took possession of him as he read the



above paragraph, at first hastily, and then with slow and careful precision, weighing the value of each sentence as he read it. Until then, he had not known how much he had depended on the hypnotic suggestion which he had imposed on the unhappy professor ; but, notwithstanding the fact that he had ridiculed the idea from the first, and had been well disposed to curse every species of occult knowledge after his experience with Dolores, his own mysterious power over Van Tassel interested him more than he knew, and he had confidently expected to get rid of the beautiful Celestine forever through the agency of her half-crazy "brother."

"What a fraud the whole game is !" he thought, putting down the paper, and giving his immediate attention to the breakfast which the waiter now placed before him. "And what an infernal fool I have been to waste time over a mere hanky-panky, superstitious folly. Those who believe in it are credulous fools or lunatics ; and the others are frauds and tricksters. It all comes of this cursed Mendoza fortune and that bewitched Dolores. I wash my hands of all occult mysteries from this time forward. There is more downright power to win the things of this world in Olive Gaye than in all the other women I know of ; and as it is the things of this world I pine for, I shall stick to Olive, now, and between us, we are pretty sure to get what we are after."

He hurriedly swallowed his coffee, hastened to Van Tassel's rooms, to which their original owner had not yet returned, and an hour later he was settled in an obscure but comfortable hotel, and registered under an assumed name ; for he determined to remain but a few days longer in New York, and to leave no clew by which Mary Hamilton's father could trace him.

So rapidly had events chased each other in his life for the past forty hours, that Clarence Stanley felt himself



to be an older man when at last he set out to call on his brilliant *fiancée*, but, happily, he did not look so, and he was glad to think that Olive would be satisfied with his appearance.

"I shall waste no time in making excuses for yesterday," he said to himself, as he neared the house; and, glancing up at it, saw a dark, laughing face looking toward him from the drawing-room window. "By Jove! There she is, and not a bit offended." And when he reached the door it was instantly opened, before he had time to touch the bell.

"Come in!" said Olive, merrily. "I ought to scold you, but I can imagine that you were very busy last evening and probably forgot all about me. I have just parted from our dear Celestine. Such an adventure last night! She has told me all she knows and all she suspects, and she is almost frightened to death, the newspapers to the contrary notwithstanding. I gave her good advice, and I think she will take it. You are dying to know what the advice was. I will tell you."

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## CHAPTER XXVII.

FATE THROWS THE DICE FOR OLIVE GAYE.

At these words of his *fiancée*, a slight shiver passed over Stanley, and instinctively he braced his nerves for a possible encounter with Celestine. But instantaneously he felt how unlikely it would be that this daring girl would subject him to an ordeal not merely trying to him but full of danger for the success of her own



ambitious plans. He therefore answered her mocking smile with a glance that reflected an equal expression of scornful mockery, and he had the satisfaction of perceiving that she only admired him the more for his cool impertinence.

"You know I hadn't much confidence in your plan, Clarence," she said, indicating a seat close beside her on a *tête-à-tête* sofa ; "and, though you have told me but little about your power over this hypnotized slave of yours, I think I am right in guessing that you hoped to rid yourself of her by means of your power over him."

"Yes, I did ; and the attempt has been a failure," he answered, moodily. "My only hope now is in you, Olive. I will not disguise from you that I am in a bad plight. Two people live who are very dangerous to me : Celestine, who suspects a great deal and may yet learn the truth—"

"Don't be troubled about Celestine," interrupted Olive, in a manner of encouraging confidence. "As you don't yet know, I sent a little note to the baron after we parted yesterday, and the contents, combined with the attempt of last night, have driven him quite mad with jealousy. Of course, I called on the fair baroness, when I read this morning's news, and, in the character of her most intimate friend, I was at once admitted to her presence ; and notwithstanding the vigilance of the jealous and furious husband, I contrived to have a few minutes of private conversation with her. It appears that the baron suspects the crazy Van Tassel to have been either her first husband or an emissary from him who had intended to murder *him*, and not Celestine ; and so great has his rage and jealousy against his wife become that she is half insane with terror. She is a shallow creature, and if you were now to appear before her as Carlos Mendoza and claim



her as your wife, she would flee from you instead of casting herself into your arms, madly as she has loved you and still loves you. I was amazed to see how abject mere physical fear could make anyone. Of course, my advice to her was to leave New York forever—even to leave this country, and to do it at once and with such a show of repugnance for the possible re-appearance of her first husband that the baron's jealousy would be at once appeased."

"But what reason has he to suppose that I am—that is, that Carlos Mendoza is not dead? She has not been mad enough to tell him of her mistake in regard to my fancied resemblance to her first husband?"

"No, my dear Clarence; I don't think that she has been silly enough to tell him about that; but the anonymous letter received by the baron stated, on the positive authority of the writer's knowledge, that you were—that is to say, that Carlos Mendoza was alive, and that the baroness was in the habit of giving him private interviews. This letter, which the baron showed her, while it alarmed the baroness almost as much as it had infuriated the baron, also gave her a momentary assurance that she had really recognized her first husband in the Honorable Clarence Stanley. But don't be alarmed, my dear. She is wholly under the influence of terror, and she will leave this country forever within a few days."

Her listener, who had been rather paler than usual, slowly recovered his customary healthy coloring, and drew a sigh of relief when the girl ceased speaking.

"You are an amazing girl, Olive Gaye," said Stanley, "and I place myself in your hands without reserve. I am ready—or shall be presently—to follow you blindly. But another and more serious danger threatens us now,



and I am willing and anxious to take your advice in regard to it."

And in the briefest words he related the unexpected appearance of Dolores and the fact that Van Tassel had disappeared in her company.

Olive looked grave for some moments, and was at a loss for any suggestion or advice to offer on this matter.

"She is a singular girl," at last she said, "and if the man is so completely infatuated with her as you say, an alliance of any sort between them might be dangerous to our plans. I dislike her, and have no confidence in her airs of superiority and virtue ; but she will inevitably find out from Van Tassel the whole story of your pretended identity with Lord Clarence Stanley, and our only safety in regard to him lies in the fact that we are on guard against him and we can more easily prove him to be a dangerous lunatic than he can prove you to be other than the man whose name you bear. I do not think we need to be alarmed on this subject. But I must find out whether that Mendoza girl has left the Hamilton family. I cannot go there personally, for Polly dislikes and mistrusts me, and I don't like her. To confess the truth, Lord Clarence, I am inclined to be jealous of her. In your inmost heart, my dear Clarence, or what passes for that organ, I believe that you are more than half in love with Polly Hamilton, and you are sorry now that you have lost the chance of marrying her."

"What, when I have the choice of you instead?" exclaimed Stanley. "My dearest girl ! How can you do yourself such injustice?"

Olive Gaye felt her cheek redden angrily. There was an insolent freedom in the man's tone which she resented with suppressed but bitter fury. Although every day now was making her more indifferent to the



voice of conscience—a voice which had, indeed, always spoken to her in muffled tones—she had still the species of feminine vanity that craves, at least, an outward semblance of respect; and she had always been accustomed to the superficial homage of all men whom she met in society.

“The man is not a gentleman,” she thought, “not even in outward seeming. How could the Hamiltons have been deceived in him all these years? But how handsome! I suppose Polly was quite mad about him, and, of course, that would blind her father and mother. But I must get some hold on him even stronger than my knowledge of his early life; for when I have married him, it will be as much to my interest as to his own to preserve his secret; and, devil that he is, he knows that as well as I do.”

While these thoughts were passing through the shrewed mind of Miss Gaye, she was looking up into her lover's face with the ingenuous and childlike smile which deceived most men and was not wholly without effect even in the keen eyes now observing her; while the glowing crimson of her cheek might well enough pass for the blush of pleasure in listening to a compliment from the lips of the man whom she loved.

“Do you really think so, dear Clarence?” she answered. “I'm afraid that I am falling in love with you, wicked fellow as you are! But, what was I saying? Ah—yes: I will get Bertha Sefton to call on Polly Hamilton. Bertha will do anything for me, and in that way I will find out if Dolores Mendoza has left Polly, or, worse still, if she has brought Van Tassel back there with her. My uncle knows of our engagement, Clarence, and of your sudden accession to the title, and he is prepared to meet you as my *fiancée*. I have made everything easy for you, even to fixing the day for our mar-



riage ; I have also written to Toddlekins, with a view to future emergencies—just such a letter as will bind her forever, and more closely than before, to me and my interests in every form. Ah, there is Uncle Gaye ! Let me introduce you to him.”

Lord Clarence found himself received in every way as such a distinguished personage ought to be received by the head of a family into which he was about to enter as an honored and welcome member. Mr. Gaye had, in truth, been momentarily surprised by his niece's announcement of her engagement, but when she reminded him of their intimacy with the family of her betrothed, it soon came to seem a very natural outcome of that acquaintance, and in a few days, the engagement was accepted by the household in the matter-of-course manner in which Olive Gaye's actions were generally received by the persons most nearly affected by them.

Despite his admiration for Olive Gaye's particular kind of cleverness and her quite extraordinary executive ability, Stanley could never rid himself of the feeling that he had been captured and was held, like any other captive animal, with a chain long enough for apparent freedom, it is true, and loose enough to make him almost unconscious of its presence, but when he sought to evade it he was made to feel, in an unmistakable manner, that it was there.

“ But I shall marry her,” he thought. “ That or the wild West and freedom is now my only alternative ; and I am afraid I am spoiled for the prairies and canyons. Too much civilization and luxury have made the necessity for their continuance imperative. In order to possess them I must marry her ; and when I do—”

Stanley did not complete the sentence ; and could Miss Gaye have seen his face at that moment, the expression of it might have robbed the coronet of the



prospective countess of much of its luster. Perhaps not, however, for Lord Clarence did not yet do full justice to the reserved forces of the remarkable young woman whom he was now engaged to marry; and when he was informed that she had concluded to have their union take place at an unexpectedly early date, he could but express satisfaction; for he was, indeed, unfeignedly glad at the prospect of a speedy departure from New York.

Outside her own family, no one knew or remotely suspected the engagement of Olive to Clarence Stanley, with the single exception of Bertha Sefton; and Miss Gaye had only taken her friend into her confidence when she realized the danger of not confiding in her. Bertha had already ascertained all that had been required in regard to Dolores having absented herself suddenly, and, as it seemed, mysteriously, from the Hamilton family; and in that way Olive and Stanley knew that she had never returned there after her meeting with Van Tassel.

"They have gone to California together," said Stanley. "I feel they have done so in quest of the Santiago Canyon, of which he knows the locality; and by this time they have arrived there and are doubtless searching for the treasure."

"Have patience, Clarence; they will not find it," said Olive. "You alone possess the secret, and as that girl's father lost his life in the search for it, you may be quite certain she is in no haste to risk hers—no—no! I learn through Bertha that she has left the Hamilton's for entirely different reasons—in which Polly believes, but in which Mrs. Hamilton does not put the least faith. The dear mother, on the contrary, has lost all confidence in the wonderful Spanish señorita, in the belief that her sudden and mysterious disappearance is



explained by the equally sudden and mysterious disappearance of Lord Clarence Stanley—in short, Mrs. Hamilton is firmly convinced that Polly's late sweetheart and recently acquired sister have eloped together."

"Then they do not suspect that I am still in New York?" said Stanley, eagerly.

He was, in truth, not without alarm at the prospect of being some day brought face to face with Polly Hamilton's father—and he knew the latter well enough to have a wholesome fear of such an encounter. Mr. Hamilton was an old Californian, and had many of the peculiarities of a class of men now too rapidly disappearing. His ideas in regard to women in general were of the old-fashioned, chivalrous kind; and in regard to his much loved daughter, in particular, he was quite capable of shooting "on sight" the man who should in any way slight, or wrong, or cause a heart-ache to his little Polly.

"Nothing short of meeting you face to face would convince Mrs. Hamilton of that fact," said Olive, in answer to Stanley's last words. "Mary does not believe that Dolores has gone off with you; and in order to keep her from learning the true state of affairs I have been obliged to take Bertha Sefton into my confidence. But Bertha is a fool and couldn't be made to keep any secret very long—therefore the sooner we start on our wedding-journey the better, and I have arranged to have the ceremony take place to-morrow evening. Bertha will be our only witness, and the minister of the church to which she belongs will perform the ceremony at his own house. She has arranged the matter for me, and my people have all agreed to be secret about the marriage for the present on account of your recent bereavement—poor boy!"



"You are a trump, Olive!" exclaimed Stanley. "I begin to think I shall end by falling in love with you, my dear. You really are worth a dozen of the ordinary sort of women!"

"Oh, thanks!" exclaimed Miss Gaye, with a slight flush, half-pleased, half-angry. "But that isn't much of a compliment. Now, I want you to explain to me once more the secret of the cryptograph, and also to go over, in detail, every point of the Mendoza story, in so far as it has any bearing whatever on this concealed treasure. We are going to find that treasure, my Clarence, we are going to take possession of it, and we are going to enjoy it together; and, in order that there may be no mistake of any kind or in the least particular, I intend to have every point of the story and every possible or impossible circumstance connected with it at my finger's ends; then we need fear no one, neither Celestine, Van Tassel nor Dolores, nor yet the old earl, Lord Harold and his sister, or even dear old Toddlekens!"

Stanley gave a hurried glance about the room and then toward the door, which was closed, but not locked.

Olive rose and, with a low, gurgling laugh, like that of a playful child, locked the door.

"Just to satisfy your suspicious mind, dear," she said, coming back to her chair that was drawn up close beside him. "It is quite unnecessary, for we are alone in the house; even the servants are out, and my uncle and his family will not return before midnight. I arranged this *tête-à-tête* on purpose, that we might suffer no interruption."

Stanley's smile was eloquent of appreciation; but his admiration also betrayed itself in words.

"You forget nothing, Olive," he said. "You are pos-



itively wonderful. If I had only known you sooner, I should have found the Mendoza treasure before now."

He drew from his pocketbook—the same old one, marked with the arms of the Windermere family, that he had carried for so many years—all the papers relating to the cryptograph, both the original parchment and the various translations and cuttings of the separate pieces of the picture forming the figure of the Indian princess.

These he spread out on the table, and for hours this man and the girl who had determined to be his wife pored over the mysterious script, studying it word for word, letter by letter, and finding many new and hidden meanings in it, until both felt that it was engraved on heart and brain forever.

During the days which had elapsed since Stanley and Olive had become engaged they had grown very confidential with each other in regard to their past lives. The most devoted, passionate and reciprocal love could hardly have given more complete confidence between lovers; but each knew that it was more truly in the nature of that "honor among thieves" which becomes a necessity in such cases for purposes of future safety.

And it must be admitted that, notwithstanding her ambition, her heartlessness and her lack of true refinement, there were moments when Olive Gaye revolted against the position in which she had placed herself, and for brief intervals she would occasionally be overwhelmed with a feeling of loathing and contempt for herself even greater than she ever felt toward the man with whom she was associated. But all such twinges of conscience were brief and were quickly stifled.

It was late when they ceased to pore over the secret of the cryptograph, but both felt that they thoroughly



understood it, and each longed for the hour when he or she could set out in search of the hidden treasure.

"To-morrow evening, dearest," said Stanley with a smile, as he replaced the various papers in his pocket-book and then returned the pocket-book to his breast-pocket. "I mean it now, Olive, when I say that. You are really 'dearest' to me now."

"What!" exclaimed Olive, with a mocking laugh. "Are you really falling in love with me, Clarence?"

"Really, yes," answered Stanley. "Like to like, you know. I never met the right kind of woman till now; but in you I see myself reflected, and, in a way, improved upon."

Olive Gaye again felt that twinge of dislike, almost of loathing, that she had often felt before, and for a moment the desire to say something cuttingly bitter was so great that she could hardly repress it; but she did repress the words, promising herself that the time would yet come when she could avenge many slights and impertinences which she now compelled herself to accept with smiling indifference.

She accompanied her lover to the door, and as she raised her face to his for the good-night kiss, which he pressed with all a lover's fervor on her small red mouth, a great, old-fashioned clock in the upper hall struck the hour in deep, sonorous peals of sound.

"Eleven o'clock, Clarence. I had no thought it was so late. Uncle Gaye and the girls will soon be here. Good-night, good-night, dear boy; but come very early in the morning. There is much to be arranged yet, and then we will appoint where and when to meet Bertha in the evening."

She hastily closed the door as her lover turned to wave his hand in adieu; and then she drew a sigh of mingled relief, pain and anger.



"I love that man!" she muttered to herself; "but that won't last, because I hate him, too. Heigh-ho! I wonder, as the French say, if the game is worth the candle. But it is too late now for moralizing, and fate will help me through, as usual."

"You *are* early, dear," said Miss Gaye to Lord Clarence, when, on the following morning, she ran down stairs to meet him. "Come here! Let me look at you. As I live, I don't believe you have read the news this morning, Clarence."

"Well, I have not," said Stanley, carelessly. "There is nothing that can happen of any particular interest to me any more. Or is there? What has happened? Anything that concerns me, is it?"

"Read and judge for yourself," said Olive; and, taking a slip of paper from her corsage—a slip she had carefully cut from the morning news—she placed it in Stanley's hand.

And this was the startling announcement that met his eyes:

#### SECOND-ACT IN THE DRAMA.

"The attempt at a tragedy begun two days ago in the house of Baron von Helmholtz was, last night, successfully carried out. The beautiful young baroness was found, at about eleven o'clock, dead, lying on a lounge in her room. The baron, who had just entered, was the one to make the discovery; and notwithstanding the madness of his grief, he has so far controlled it as to give valuable suggestions to the police in regard to this most terrible tragedy. The young countess, it appears, had been married before, to a Spanish adventurer who had treated her vilely, and who was supposed to have been killed, years ago, in a quarrel at a gaming-table; but only a fortnight since, or thereabouts, the



baron received anonymous intelligence of the re-appearance of the first husband, whose name was Carlos Mendoza. The baroness was murdered by means of a long, slender dagger, driven through the heart, and which had been left in the fatal wound by the murderer—who had probably fled in trepidation at some approaching sound—and this dagger, taken possession of immediately by the police, bears on its blade the name of ‘Carlos Mendoza,’ the letters deeply engraved in the steel—”

“This is Van’s work !” exclaimed Stanley, in a low tone, as he turned to Olive Gaye, who stood beside him, her gaze fastened on the words while he read them, “without doubt this is Van’s work, but what infernal stupidity about the dagger—the one I gave him bore his own name—I did not even know he had the other one ! This might be infernally awkward if I should ever—that is to say, if Carlos Mendoza *does* live, it might be deuced unpleasant for him ; but he may be lucky enough to be able to prove an alibi—”

Olive laughed merrily.

“The unlucky Carlos may be fortunate enough to prove an alibi ; though, if he were in your place, Clarence, he couldn’t.”

“Why not ?” said Stanley, sharply, and glancing at the printed slip, “according to the newspaper report, this woman must have met her death some time between ten o’clock, when her maid left her, perfectly well, and eleven o’clock, when her husband, entering her room, found her dead. Now, I was with you, here in this room the entire evening, and when I parted from you it struck eleven o’clock, and you remarked upon the hour.”

“Oh, yes, dear Clarence, but I am the only living person who can help you to prove an alibi—and to night



I shall be your wife. In such a case a wife's evidence would not be received either for or against a suspected criminal. So you see, dearest, you would be quite helpless, if you *were* Carlos Mendoza, and if you *should*, by chance, be arrested on circumstantial evidence—because if I am *not* your wife then I shall hate you, and in that case I would remain silent, while if I *am* your wife my evidence would have no value. Poor Carlos! How glad you should be that you are Clarence now and not Carlos."

Stanley felt a cold chill run over him from head to foot as he met the mocking, smiling eyes of his future wife—and from that moment he felt that he was a doomed man, for, whether he married her now, or fled from her, either way he was at the mercy of this heartless, unscrupulous, cruel girl; for she held his life and future safety in the hollow of her hand.

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## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### DOLORES IS VINDICATED.

As day followed day, and her lover neither returned, nor made any effort, by letter or otherwise, to obtain the forgiveness she would so gladly have bestowed on him, the conviction forced itself upon Polly Hamilton that Clarence Stanley was gone forever. In bitterness of soul she had told herself again and again, from the first moment of their separation, that this was so; but to realize the unuttered thought as an irrevocable fact—this was a different and far more terrible matter!

But it was a fact, too surely, now, too cruelly she felt this—a horrible, infamous, unbearable fact, which,



nevertheless must be borne ; and the effort she made to meet it bravely and with dignity was pitiful and heart-breaking in the eyes of the parents who adored her, and to whom her beloved face was as an open book on which they read every hidden tear and every smothered sigh. Neither did any word or token come from Dolores. There was no reason for expecting anything of the kind, as Polly constantly reminded her mother ; “for Rita had wished her place of residence for the present to remain wholly unknown. Such had been her intention in leaving them, for she judged rightly in suspecting that she would be at once sought out and implored to return.” But although Mary Hamilton spoke in this manner both to her father and mother, and in the silence of her own thoughts tried to cheat herself with the same excuse, she knew all the time that in the depths of her soul she had hoped that Dolores would find some way of sending her a sign that she continued to think of her and love her as before ; and, unconsciously to herself, the reiterated suspicions of Mrs. Hamilton were beginning to tell upon her. She, who had always been bright and cheerful as the morning, radiant as June sunshine and happy and sweet of temper as all young, healthy, untrammelled life should be, was now the embodiment of irritability, melancholy, fitful, bitter, derisive merriment, or else irrepressible, unconquerable grief.

“Don’t speak to me of Rita’s treachery,” she said one day, to her mother, turning upon her almost furiously. “She is incapable of treachery. Besides which, it is unnecessary. I gave him to her. Yes, madly as I have loved Clarence Stanley, I would not owe him to any woman’s pity, not even to Rita. I told her that if she really loved him, I gave them to each other freely,



and I would have died rather than come between them."

"Then she has taken you at your word, and probably justifies herself in that way for her deceitful behavior. How much nobler of her to have spoken the truth to your face and so showed herself worthy of your self-sacrificing love and friendship," said Mrs. Hamilton. "But it was madness of you, Polly, dear, to give up your lover in that way to any other girl—you have destroyed your brilliant prospects! Foolish child! Did you not know that your father could have compelled Lord Clarence to do you justice by keeping his engagement to you."

"Oh, dear—dear mamma! Say, no more, I beg of you!" cried Polly, half-frantic with wounded pride and repressed feeling. "What kind of a girl should I be to accept a husband who was *compelled* to marry me? Do you think I have no pride? And don't call him 'Lord Clarence'—I hate the thought that it has made you forget that I value my own dignity and self-respect more than a thousand titles. If you had not set your mind on seeing me the Countess of Windermere you never could have had the thought of *compelling* any man to do me justice in a matter where the man's own love should be the only compulsion ever known."

Mrs. Hamilton colored deeply with momentary anger and bitter mortification, for the unintentional rebuke stung her deeply, because she felt the full force of her daughter's words.

"You are right, Polly," she said, "and I hope you will forgive me. You are more to me than all the countesses or fine ladies that ever were heard of; it was only because such a title seemed so fitting to my own dear, lovely girl, that my mind has dwelt on it. But I will never speak of it again. More than that, I



will never speak of him again or of Dolores either (at least, until we hear the right kind of news from her), if you will but promise me to tear this false and wretched man forever from your thoughts."

"I promise you, darling mother. More than that, I tell you truly now when I say that I have already torn him from my heart. It was not Clarence Stanley that I loved, but the thought, the ideal of him that I had set up in my own soul. Ah, that is the hard thing to overcome! But I will do it, mamma. Only be patient with me and try to understand me. When you see me sad or weeping, do not think that I am grieving for the loss of Lord Clarence Stanley. No, no! The man I loved never lived; and I am but grieving, weeping, despairing over the grave of my dead love. A dead love! A buried lover who never even lived! Oh, mamma, it may seem a foolish grief, but it is very real and terrible to me!"

Mrs. Hamilton looked at the pale and now tearless face of her suffering child, and began to realize that she had never before understood the almost tragic possibilities of her once gay, light-hearted, happy daughter. She folded her in her arms and held her close to her heart, and then she whispered a thought which came to her suddenly:

"Love, real love, can never die, Polly, dear. It is a great misfortune to have wasted such a love as yours, even for a short time, on the wrong man; but the world is wide, and you are but a child yet. Bury the false lover, if you will, darling—the sooner the better; but you will yet meet the true lover, and then you will know the dead love in your heart is only sleeping, waiting for the right man to awaken it to new and stronger life than it has yet known."

Polly started and thrilled strangely. There was



surely some great force in that thought. She could not yet understand it, and it seemed to give her only pain ; and yet, what had her mother said ? The world was wide, and she was yet but a very young girl !

"Oh, mamma !" she murmured. "Do not speak to me of other men. I think I hate the whole race of men just now—all except papa—and the whole world is dreary, dreary—especially this part of it—and I wish, I wish I could leave New York—now, to-day—this—hour—forever !"

"And so you shall, dearest !" exclaimed Mrs. Hamilton, glad enough for the suggestion, and reminded by it of the advice which Doctor Macdonald had given her to take Mary away and give her the benefit of new scenes and new associations at once. "Your father has spoken of going to California this very week ; business calls him there imperatively. Why should we not return there with him ?"

"Why, indeed ?" exclaimed Mary, her face flushed and bright with the thought. "I should be so glad to go ; and it will bring me nearer to Dolores, to my own dear Rita ! Yes, I know I shall find her there !"

Mrs. Hamilton repressed the words of impatience that rose to her lips. Her suspicions in regard to Dolores and Stanley remained unchanged. But, determined to keep her promise to Polly so recently given, she turned away, and, going to the door, answered in person the servant who had just knocked.

"It is Bertha Sefton," she said, looking toward Polly. "Norah says that although she gave your message that you could not see any one to-day, Miss Sefton insists on seeing you, and declares she will not go away without speaking to you. Very rude of her ! Shall I go down and see her, dear ?"

"No, mamma, dear ; let her come up. Since I am



going away, I ought to see her to say good-bye. She has been constant in calling every day, though I have refused to see her now for almost a week. Norah, show Miss Sefton up here ; say I will see her in my room."

But Bertha Sefton did not wait for the servant to repeat these words. She had followed Norah upstairs, greatly to the girl's surprise, and, having already heard all that Mary Hamilton had said, now hurriedly entered the room, and in great agitation threw herself at the feet of her friend, exclaiming :

"Polly, Polly ! Forgive me, promise to forgive me, or I will never rise from here !"

"Forgive you ?" asked Polly, in wondering amazement, " what am I to forgive, Bertha ? Rise, there's a good girl. I'm sure there is nothing that you can have done but what I can forgive very easily ; now, rise ! What is it I am to forgive ?"

"Ah, but that is just the trouble ?" continued Bertha, wildly, "you don't yet know what I have done, and you can never guess, and that is what makes it so hard ; but you must first promise to forgive me, or else I can never get courage to tell you the whole dreadful truth. Promise, promise !"

She seized Polly's hands and, in her excitement, held them so tight that her grasp left the impress of her gloved fingers on the fingers of Polly.

"Well, well," said the latter, soothingly, "I forgive you whatever it is, Bertha ; now calm yourself, and rise. I don't like having people on their knees at my feet."

"Oh, dearest Polly, how shall I tell you ? How could I ever be such a treacherous wretch ?"

She had started to her feet at Polly's last words, and now stood helplessly twisting her hands together, tearing her gloves and presenting an almost distraught



appearance, very unlike the usual placid and calm Bertha Sefton. At length, with an effort, she overcame her agitation.

"Polly," she said, "I don't wish to make my own fault the least little bit less than it really is ; but this has been all the doing of Olive Gaye—my part in it as well as hers. She has acquired such a power over me, it has been like witchcraft. She has made me do just as she wished. But she is gone now, and, I hope, gone out of my life forever, and I have recovered my senses. In the beginning it was by playing on my feelings that she first gained an influence over me. I didn't know that I was jealous, and I wasn't really ; but she made me feel bitter against you, because you had seemed to slight my friendship in your love for Dolores Mendoza ; and then when Dolores left you so suddenly, she declared it was a righteous punishment upon you for betraying my friendship, because I had better and prior claims. Oh, I can't tell you how deep and how cunning she is ! She makes thoughts grow in one's mind that never had a place there before. Then, about Mr. Stanley—it was so dreadful, and you breaking your heart about him all the time, and I pretending not to know ! How could I be so wicked !"

Polly's hand instinctively went to her heart ; she felt suffocated. What was she about to hear ? Had her mother been right after all ? She felt dizzy and trembled as if about to fall. Mrs. Hamilton quickly passed her arm about the trembling form of her daughter and turned sternly toward their visitor.

"That man's name is not to be mentioned again in this house !" she said. "My daughter sent him from her. If you come here, Miss Sefton, to say that you have assisted in his elopement with Dolores, perhaps



my poor child can forgive you. I say 'perhaps,' but I am sure that I never can forgive you while I live !"

"Oh, not with Dolores ! I know nothing of *her* !" exclaimed Bertha, bursting into tears. "Lord Clarence Stanley has married Olive Gaye ; and I did what I could to assist them : I engaged the clergyman, and stood by and saw them married, and signed my name as witness. It was all as horrid as anything could be, and not a bit like a real marriage with a real lord, except, of course, that Mr. Martin *is* a real clergyman ; but I never supposed Olive Gaye would be satisfied with such a wedding as that. They were married last night, and they said good-bye to me at the door of the house when we left Mr. Martin's, jumped into a carriage that was waiting, and were driven away and out of sight before I could realize that they were gone. I stood and looked after them, and pinched myself black and blue to prove it wasn't a dream. And it was real—real ! And, oh, Polly, do *try* to forgive me, for I never can forgive myself !"

Polly Hamilton drew a long breath of profound and joyous relief, and, to Bertha's amazement, she caught her in her arms and kissed her.

"Olive Gaye !" repeated Mrs. Hamilton, stupidly. "Olive Gaye ! Lord Clarence Stanley has married Olive Gaye, and she will be Countess of Windermere !"

"And much good may it do her !" exclaimed Polly Hamilton. "She is entirely welcome to that honor. And now, mamma, dear, you will admit that Rita is entirely vindicated. My own darling Rita ! How glad I am that I have believed in her, in spite of everything ! Bertha, you have brought me joyful news ; so that, if you had been even less a friend than you accuse yourself of being, I think *I* could still forgive you everything."





## CHAPTER XXIX.

### IN THE SANTIAGO CANYON.

Upon a rustic seat, beneath the spreading branches of a live-oak tree, sat two ladies in silent but pleased contemplation of two little girls who were at that moment amusing themselves with the fallen "cups and saucers" of the oak, by which name they described the acorns and their outer rings, with which the green sward was thickly covered. The younger and by far the more beautiful of these two ladies was dressed in white, but the black sash that defined her slender waist and the knots of narrow black ribbon at the throat and on the sleeves served to indicate that the wearer was in mourning, while the pensive and somewhat worn young face of the lovely mourner showed plainly enough that her grief had been a heavy one. The second lady was evidently many years older than her companion, although a merry heart and a happy life had made the years pass so lightly as hardly to leave the traces of their flight. She was the mother of the little girls, and her companion was their governess ; but the position of the latter was merely nominal. Her employer was a dear and intimate friend, who had, in early girlhood, been the friend of her young governess's mother, and who now



felt far more like a mother toward her early friend's daughter than a mere employer for paid services.

"Dolores," said Mrs. Travers, suddenly breaking the silence, "do you know, dear, that it distresses me to observe that the sadness I thought at first wholly due to your bereavement and loneliness does not grow less with time?"

"It will, dear Mrs. Travers," returned Dolores, with an effort assuming a brighter expression and calling more animation into her voice and manner; "but, indeed, I shall never get accustomed to my loss in mamma's death and I can never cease to mourn her absence. It means so much to me! Oh, it is a whole world of grief and sorrow!"

"Of course it is, dear, and who could wish to have you love her less? For that is the true test. We mourn the absence of those we love just in proportion to the amount of our love for them, unless we are fortunate enough to feel that they are not very far away. But cannot you feel the presence, the true spiritual presence of your mother, Dolores, although she is no longer visible or tangible?"

Dolores turned to her companion with a bright answering look of faith and sympathy.

"I always feel so," she said; "I always have felt so. I could not bear my life but for that conviction—that mamma has not really left me; that she is often near me in spirit and thought. But there are times when that is *not* a comfort; it is a positive pain because it is so unsatisfying, and I so love to feel her material presence, to hold her in my arms and feel her kiss on my face. Dear Mrs. Travers, so long as we live in this poor, old-fashioned, every-day human world we must forever yearn for 'the touch of a vanished hand and the sound of a voice that is still.' But, indeed, I will try



not to be selfish in my grief, especially in the presence of the children, for it is not right to impose sorrows that can neither be known nor understood on young, growing minds. I had so much of that in my own childhood that I can thoroughly understand the effect of it,—but in my case it was unavoidable. Ever since papa died my whole life has been gray except for the brightness of my mother's love !”

“Oh, you dear girl !” exclaimed Mrs. Travers, affectionately. “Don't imagine for one moment that I require any justification for your sadness ! It is only my wish to remove, or at least to lighten it, that made me speak of it. The children adore you, and they don't find you sad—in fact, that is one reason why I allow you to fatigue yourself in your duties toward them. I see that you often forget yourself entirely in devotion to them. But Dolores, there are times when I cannot forgive myself for having lost trace of your mother. I had gone to Paris, to have what my mother called ‘a few years' finishing,’ and then I remained several years in France. When I returned to San Francisco I heard something of the ill-fortune that had overtaken your father ; but before I could trace your family and find out what had become of you, I went abroad again, with papa, and we spent several years in England ; it was there I was married, and there I lived for many years, only returning to California again for a brief visit. But, brief though it was, I tried to get some news of my dear Alice, but never could trace her.

“Your father was at all times a very reticent man, and when misfortune overtook him I suppose he became still more so ; besides he was so devoted to Alice that, so long as he possessed her love, all else might go and he would neither know nor care, unless she suffered by it. She was literally the whole world to him.”



"Yes," said Dolores, a soft flush overspreading her pale, fine, delicate face, "that was my dear father! How often I have heard mamma speak of his love for her in just those words—and such a love *is* all the world and ought to be, to any man or woman."

"Yes, I suppose so," returned Mrs. Travers, musingly, "a grand passion is a fine thing—when it is the real thing; but I don't think I am capable of it myself. Now you, Dolores, with such a father and mother as you had, I suppose when you fall in love it will be an absorbing affair—in fact, there is what one might call hereditary predisposition—"

"I suppose so—I certainly hope so," answered Dolores. The delicate flush that had overspread her face deepened to a vivid crimson on the soft, peach-like cheek. "It is the only love worth knowing—the instant, irresistible passion of two kindred souls recognizing themselves as one, in the electric flash of a first momentary but all-sufficient look."

"Oh, good gracious, Dolores!" cried Mrs. Travers, with an accent of comic despair. "You speak with all the conviction of a perfect knowledge of the subject. I do hope you have not fallen in love with any one—at least, not yet."

"I cannot answer that," said Dolores, in confusion, "because, though I feel that I know what love should be, I don't yet know—oh, please, dear Mrs. Travers, don't ask me any more about it!"

"Oh, Dolores!" groaned Mrs. Travers, "don't say—don't tell me! Or, rather, *do* tell me; dear, I beg of you to answer me just one question: Is it? Oh, say it is *not* that poor Henri Van Tassel?"

Dolores turned on her friend a look of such blank amazement, that Mrs. Travers felt herself most eloquently answered, even before the astonished girl burst



into peals of laughter—laughter which was repeated again and again, till the air reverberated with the sound, and the children glanced inquiringly but appreciatively toward their usually grave and restrained governess, whom they had never before known capable of such merriment.

“Poor Henri!” said Dolores, at last, “I have told you, from the first, that he was as a brother to me, and I am even more grateful for him than for myself to have found a home here; it never dawned on me for a moment that any one, least of all you, could mistake our relation toward each other.”

“Well, dear, I am very glad,” said Mrs. Travers, “to have you deny it so emphatically, and the idea is perfectly absurd, for I didn’t really suppose there was love of that sort between you and Van Tassel. But, my dear Dolores, the man simply worships you, and then you have many times gone off over the mountains for long walks together, and you have always come back looking so very serious and often quite troubled.”

“That is true,” responded Dolores, very gravely, “and there is much that we have spoken of that I would be glad to tell you about, and concerning which I am much in need of advice; but, alas! it involves the happiness of another whom I love more than myself—my dear, dear Polly Hamilton.”

“‘Polly Hamilton?’ Yes, you have told me of her, Dolores; and, though you are too generous to say so, I am sure that man to whom she was engaged was really in love with *you*, and that is why you were obliged to steal away so mysteriously.”

“Yes, dear Mrs. Travers, I am obliged to let you guess that much; but, please spare me from saying more. Perhaps I may never see dear Polly again; indeed, knowing all that I do now, it will be impossible.



For she is by this time, or will be soon, married to Lord Clarence—”

“ ‘ Lord Clarence ! ’ ” exclaimed Mrs. Travers excitedly. “ You never called him so before ! Surely it cannot be possible ? Is he Clarence Stanley ? ”

“ That was the name I knew him by,” said Dolores, in a very guarded tone.

By this time she knew all that Van Tassel knew as to the identity of Clarence Stanley and Carlos Mendoza ; and her mind was torn with anxiety as to whether to keep the secret or make it known to the Hamiltons. She knew nothing of Polly since the hour she had parted from her, and she felt certain that Stanley, as soon as he should be reconciled to her, would urge a speedy marriage ; and, if they were already married, what terrible anguish would she inflict by the revelations she could now make concerning the false Lord Clarence Stanley.

Mrs. Travers, had she been less excited by what she had just heard, might have read a part of this perplexity and trouble in the looks and tones of Dolores ; but her mind was wholly occupied with different ideas.

“ How extraordinary this is ! ” she said, in answer to the words of Dolores. “ And how strange that I should be the one to give Lord Harold Moray this most interesting news. You must know, my dear, that there is the greatest anxiety in the Stanley family now to find this missing Lord Clarence. It was just about the time we left New York that the news was published of the death of Lord Appleby and his only child ; and a few days before I had met the heir-at-law, Lord Harold Moray, who had recently arrived in this country in search of the missing heir. Lord Appleby was still living when Lord Harold left England ; and the latter, so far from wishing the succession to Win-



dermere for himself, had only one desire—to find Clarence Stanley, who was betrothed to Constance Moray ; and—oh dear—when he does find him now, how will it be, since you say he is probably married to Polly Hamilton ?”

Dolores clasped her hands in despair and became quite pale.

“Oh, my poor, dear Polly !” she said. “She has given her heart to a wretch—to a monster—I fear ; and everything I hear about him only confirms my own feeling against him, which declared itself from the first moment of our meeting.”

“Well, yes,” said Mrs. Travers, “he seems to be something of a Don Giovanni. First he engages himself to Lady Constance Moray ; then to your friend, Polly Hamilton, whom he would certainly have thrown over for you, if you had been willing. But that is the way with men, my dear. They are all like that, with a few exceptions, of course, which only prove the rule. But was there anything else about this fascinating Clarence, apart from his fickleness, that was particularly wrong ?”

“Oh, he was *all* wrong—everything about him !” Dolores began, impetuously.

And then, remembering Polly, she shut her lips firmly, resolved not to speak another word on the distressing subject until she could give it all most careful consideration in the solitude of her own thoughts. And what a horrible complication, aided now by the new light that Van Tassel had shed on Stanley, the whole affair had become ! How her heart ached for Polly ! And she felt disloyal toward her that she was obliged, even temporarily, to seem her rival. That, at least, she could explain to Mrs. Travers, and she said quickly :



"But I must not let you suppose that *I* was the rival of dear Polly Hamilton. It was not so, as I assured her, and as I fervently hope she is now quite convinced. If that man was ever capable of loving any woman, he was in love with Polly. But the passion of his life was gold. He knew from the first that I was the direct and only true heir of the great Mendoza treasure, and he was simply insane on that subject. He has pursued it all his life, and in me he saw his ruling idea embodied. When he no longer sees me, his love will revert again to the buried treasure, and his allegiance to Polly, such as it is, will be as loyal as before he ever saw me."

"How strange, Dolores!" answered Mrs. Travers. "And there may be something in what you say. The Stanley family is mixed up in relationship with a Spanish family of your name, and so is Lord Harold Moray. Strange that I never thought of it before. I knew them quite well during my stay in England, but my acquaintance was more particularly with the Moray branch of the family. When I met Lord Harold in New York, of course he told me of his object in visiting the country, and that he was coming to California to follow up a clew which he had obtained in regard to his missing kinsman. Of course, I invited him when he should come this way to be my guest, and I am in momentary expectation of his arrival. Jim Sing has actually gone to the Santa Ana station to meet him, and by this time he is on his way through the canyon."

Dolores could not repress a slight start of apprehension, and she said, in a visibly troubled manner:

"I am very sorry to hear this, dear; it makes my position much more unpleasant. Oh, don't ask me now! I must think; I must consider. If I am to meet this gentleman, and he is in search of Lord Clarence Stanley—oh, Mrs. Travers, I see that I shall have to tell you



all I know about that man and take your advice, for Polly's sake, as to what I ought to do."

"My dear, I shall be delighted!" said Mrs. Travers, gayly. "If there is anything I am most fitted for, beyond all other things, it is the giving of advice. You will find that I have mines of wisdom garnered up inside this silly little head of mine. Even my severe husband is complimentary enough to say that I am not such a fool as I look. But tell me, Dolores, about this mysterious Mendoza treasure, of which I used to hear ages ago. Have you no idea where it lies buried?"

"Not in the least, except that it is concealed somewhere in the Santiago Canyon."

"In the Santiago Canyon?" cried Mrs. Travers, excitedly. "Why, this is the Santiago Canyon, right here, where we are now living!"

"Yes, I know it," replied Dolores; "I have known it ever since I came home with you; and somewhere in this canyon my dear father found a grave. Death was the only treasure he found here, and," she added sadly, "perhaps it is the greatest of all treasures to those who find it. Certainly it is if it opens the gate to the only true life."

"My dearest girl," said Mrs. Travers, almost reprov-ingly—she quite dreaded a line of thinking to which she often thought Dolores too much inclined, and which, to her, seemed morbid—"you know you promised me not to have such gloomy thoughts. Do you know in what part of the canyon your poor father was buried?"

"Mamma has often enough described the place—a little distance from a clump of sycamore trees, twelve trees growing out of a single root, she said, and on one of the trunks is carved the rudely outlined figure of an Indian woman; I don't know if that figure means any-



thing, but mamma and I have often thought that perhaps it was associated in some way with our Indian ancestor, and as papa was searching for the treasure at that time, he begged to be buried in that spot. Poor dear father ! His mind had broken down, and mamma could never understand his wild ravings about the buried treasure and its hiding-place."

"And you have absolutely no clue?" asked Mrs. Travers, in a disappointed tone.

"None at all; papa had a paper or parchment or something of the sort, containing the whole secret, but he could not follow it out, and he had either lost the paper or else had so carefully hidden it that it was worse than lost. Mamma used to have wild hopes of finding it years ago, and even to the last she clung to the thought that I should yet be a great heiress. But I take no interest in it, Mrs. Travers, none at all ! Though I have indeed sought for the sycamore-trees, it has been to find my father's grave; it was my mother's last earthly wish to be buried beside the husband she loved and who had adored her."

"Oh, Dolores, dear child ! Why did you not tell me sooner," said Mrs. Travers, in a voice tremulous with sympathetic feeling. "I could have done much to further your desire; I will immediately take steps to do so. Did you find the place?"

"Not yet, but I shall surely do so; those long rambles which you have seen me take in company with Henri have been in search of that clump of trees. I have at times almost despaired, and have wondered if they could have been a fancy of mamma, or if some accident might not, in all these years, have destroyed the trees—"

"No, no, the trees exist !" interrupted Mrs. Travers, eagerly, they are known as the haunted sycamores; it



is said that once every year, for ages past, on the 12th of October, a shadowy ghost is seen flitting about there ; it is a mere legend, of course, and no such thing occurs. Some effect of the moonlight, probably, but the ghost-story has served to locate the spot, and it can easily be found."

"On the 12th of October," repeated Dolores, "oh, why did I not tell you sooner ! I have lost so much time !"

"Don't be troubled about that, Dolores—the right time always comes—even when we think we have lost it. And I hope it has come now," she added irrelevantly, rising and taking a hasty step or two toward a gentleman who was rapidly approaching her across the lawn.

So much engaged had they been in their conversation that neither had heard the approach of the carriage on the road at some distance ; and for the moment, both had forgotten the expected arrival of a guest.

Dolores also rose, and with a vague, delighted flutter of anticipation, her gaze was fixed on the approaching stranger—she could not be mistaken ! There was not in all the world such another, so gracious, graceful, distinguished in bearing, so refined, elegant and absolutely perfect, in the elevated and the spiritual beauty of his countenance ; and now he too, had recognized her, and once more two lovely and kindred souls seemed looking at each other out of their eyes, and recognizing some close and eternal relationship in that long, deep gaze.

"My dear Dolores," said Mrs. Travers, "this is my friend, Lord Harold Moray—Lord Harold, the Señorita Mendoza."

Dolores put out her hand—her lovely white, trembling hand ; and Lord Harold, clasping it in his, felt



himself thrilled to the heart by that first touch of the warm, pink, sensitive palm.

He bowed low over her hand, and with difficulty refrained from raising it to his lips ; and Mrs. Travers thought :

“ Well, certainly, they have made an impression on each other. I could not reasonably hope for more, on a first acquaintance. But is it the first ? Can it be possible that they have met before ? ”

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## CHAPTER XXX.

### “ LOVE’S YOUNG DREAM.”

“ Well, I never believed in it, and couldn’t now if I hadn’t seen it,” exclaimed Mrs. Travers, “ but this is certainly convincing evidence that it really does sometimes happen.”

“ What are you talking about, Nell ? ” asked her husband. “ What is it that sometimes happens ? Perhaps you don’t know that you are just a little more incoherent than usual. What is the particular thing you never believed in before ? ”

“ Why, love at first sight, of course ; and there is a case of it, enough to convince the most skeptical.” And, with a sweeping wave of her hand, she indicated Dolores and Lord Harold Moray, who were just disappearing in the distance through an avenue of rose-trees and odorous flowering shrubs, all in full bloom, though it was already the first week in October. “ It is certainly not more than a fortnight since I presented those two to each other, although, as Dolores has since told



me, they had met before for one fleeting moment, and in that moment they evidently lost their hearts to each other. The very instant they met here, I saw in the first glance that they were already deep in love with each other."

"How provoking!" laughed Travers. "And you had set your heart on *making* them fall in love with each other; not a bit of practice for your brilliant gifts at match-making. I really fear, my dear, you will have to keep all your talents for home use; fortunately, we have daughters. But, I'm afraid you'll have to be looking for another governess."

"Just what I have been thinking! However, I shall wait till the present one gives warning. Dolores has not yet told me of her engagement to Lord Harold."

"And he seems to have quite forgotten his object in coming to California. Has he any news yet of Lord Clarence Stanley?"

"Oh, don't speak of him! He never will; that's all a fearful mystery. But I can't explain—I dare not—it isn't *my* secret, Travers, therefore I must keep it to myself."

"For goodness sake do, then!" said her husband, with devout earnestness, "though, *if* you do, it will be the first time."

Mrs. Travers sighed deeply, and turned away with closely compressed lips. Dolores had explained a great many things to her, and they had both concluded that, for the sake of Polly Hamilton, neither of them could speak to Lord Harold of the man who called himself Clarence Stanley, "though, even if he *has* married Miss Hamilton, the secret will be out as soon as he claims his title in England. How I wish Dolores would let me



take Travers into our confidence. I would like to look at the whole matter from a man’s point of view.”

She walked to the other side of the wide piazza and stood looking over the prospect of distant mountains and undulating valleys, now sere and yellow from the dry heat of summer, although flowers, both wild and cultivated, were in full bloom in every direction.

“It is too early yet to hope for rain,” she said, aloud ; fearing if she kept silence that her secret—which she was quite frantic to share with her husband—would, by the very pressure of that desire, escape from her keeping. “How fine the young orange-trees on that level slope near the base of Old Saddleback are looking ; I can feel the odor of the blossoms as far off as where I am now.”

Mr. Travers smiled at this transparent effort on the part of his wife to keep from talking on a more congenial subject.

“Well,” he said, “orange-blossoms will be quite in order, according to your present surmise ; and I am glad the bridegroom is not likely to be that rather lunny *protégé* of yours, Van Tassel, though I must admit that the fellow more than earns his ‘keep.’ He has excellent abilities, and since I have put him on as a kind of overseer, the workmen, both white and yellow, in every department of our ranch, attend to their business in a most satisfactory manner.”

“Do they really, now, Travers !” exclaimed his wife. “I am very glad to hear it ! But it was quite absurd in both of us—you and me—to imagine any such nonsense in regard to Van Tassel. Poor fellow ! He was a complete wreck when Dolores took him in charge. He had been in the power of a horrid man who had hypnotized him, and by means of his uncanny influence over him could make him do almost as he pleased. Oh,



it was horrible ! The very thought of such a thing frightens me ; and the poor fellow is now as completely under the influence of Dolores ; but hers is all for good. She makes every one better and nobler. It was on the very night she came to us, on the way to the hotel, that she suddenly felt as though some one were calling on her for help, and leaving the cab which was taking her to the hotel, she hastened along the street through which they had just driven and before she had walked half a block, she met this poor, demented Van Tassel, in a perfectly frantic condition, coming out of a house, into which he had been forced to go, against his will, to commit a horrible crime. But I will tell you all about that another time," Mrs. Travers concluded, hastily, "because, you see, it is a part of the secret that I must not tell you yet."

"Well, really, Mrs. Travers, I hope you are becoming mysterious enough," said her husband lightly, very little impressed by all this mystery, which was only amusing to his masculine mind, untroubled by a vestige of curiosity. "And, as the old saying is, 'talk of the What-you-may-call-him, and you see his hoof.' Here comes Van Tassel, and he looks sufficiently calm and collected to satisfy any one."

Mrs. Travers turned, and saw the professor approaching them, quickly, but without any appearance of excitement ; and the few months during which he had been engaged in regular and interesting work, and under the soothing and elevating influence of Dolores Mendoza, had, indeed, made a new man of him. He was no longer the wreck of humanity he had been when she first saw him. He stood upright and looked people straight in the eyes. He was slender and pale by nature, but both face and figure were now rounded and filled out, and his pallor was no longer cadaverous but simply that of



a complexion by nature the reverse of ruddy ; but, above all, the pathetic expression of loss which had so distinguished him from all others was gone. He had regained his will-power, and he had overcome his craving for stimulants in every form. He was well and becomingly dressed ; and while to Mr. Travers he always remained a rather puny and insignificant specimen of manhood, Mrs. Travers observed that he was growing quite good-looking ; and though it was ridiculous to think of him as a possible lover for Dolores, there was no reason in the world why some woman might not yet fall in love with the amiable little Professor Van Tassel.

“ It is for the Señorita,” he said, holding up a letter as he reached the veranda ; and coming toward Mrs. Travers, he extended the letter toward her. “ See, Madam, the post-mark shows that it is from New York, and the handwriting is that of a lady ; and I am sure there is only one lady in New York who would be writing to Dolores Mendoza.”

“ Oh, Mr. Van Tassel ! Yes, indeed, you are right !” exclaimed Mrs. Travers, sharing his thought immediately. “ And she will be so glad to get that letter ! So very glad ! Can’t you take it to her at once ? She is out walking with Lord Harold. They have gone toward the trees. You know where. The haunted sycamores !” And she pointed toward the avenue of roses and flowering shrubs through which she had seen the lovers disappear in the direction of the upper end of the long, wide canyon. “ I am sure you could overtake them, for they were walking very slowly.”

Van Tassel needed no urging, and bowing hastily to Mrs. Travers, he turned in the direction she had indicated and walked rapidly away, nor did he moderate his pace until he saw before him the two persons of whom he was in quest. Lord Harold Moray had



drawn the ungloved little hand of his companion close within his arm; and in the slender, undulating figure of Dolores, insensibly inclined toward him till her graceful head almost touched his shoulder, there was an eloquent confession, stronger than words, of the sentiment that drew them together.

Van Tassel's gaze rested on that exquisite form, to him the loveliest and noblest in the world, and insensibly his rapid pace grew slower, and he approached them so gently and with such careful steps that he could soon have heard their whispered words, if he had cared to. But he was not desirous of playing the spy on them even for a moment. His gaze dwelt on Dolores with ardent admiration, but his sentiment for the beautiful girl who had rescued him from destruction, whose pure and ennobling influence had made her the guardian angel of his soul, was more that of adoration for a being infinitely exalted above him than anything approaching merely human love. With his knowledge of Carlos Mendoza and Clarence Stanley, added to what he knew of Moray and his quest for the missing heir, he could readily guess at the perplexed state of mind from which Dolores must be suffering, in her desire to be loyal toward her friend and frank and outspoken toward her lover; and, guessing from whom the letter must be, he was fervently hoping that its contents might in some way cut through this entanglement. The instant he had approached sufficiently near to hear the low, whispered tones of the lovers, he spoke at once, before he could have time to overhear the least word that passed between them:

"I have brought you this letter, señorita, because I knew you would wish to have it immediately."

Dolores turned instantly at the sound of his voice.

"Oh, thank you, Henri; thank you so much!" she



said, pressing her lips to the dear, familiar handwriting whose exercises in Spanish she had so often corrected.

“Dear, darling Polly ! But how in the world has she found me out ? It is from Polly Hamilton, Harold,” she said, “and oh—”

She stopped suddenly, with a distressing feeling that, whether she spoke or remained silent, she must be guilty of seeming treachery either to the one man or the one woman in the world whom she loved best ; and then, with a deep sigh, she tore open the letter.

“At least I must read what she says,” she thought, “and then—”

She read hurriedly, wildly, delightedly, hardly daring to believe in the good news ; and again more calmly, but with a thrilling sense of freedom and joy. Then, with a long-drawn breath of relief from pent-up suspense and anxiety, she placed the letter in her lover’s hands.

“Read, dear Harold,” she said, “and then I will explain, and rid my mind forever of a painful secret—the only one that can ever come between you and me.”

Wondering very much, but with perfect confidence that whatever Dolores bade him do must be the right thing to be done, Lord Harold Moray read Polly Hamilton’s letter :

“At last, my darling Rita, have I found you ? For weeks and months I have sought you—from New York to San Francisco—all over California, as I thought ; then, on a false clue, back again to New York, to find here that I ought to have stayed where I was—but no matter ! For here I find what, I am quite sure now, is the right clue. I hear that a Mrs. Travers of Santiago Canyon, near Santa Ana, has a Spanish governess for her little girls ; that the governess comes from the



East (all pearls of price comes from the East, dear), that her name is Dolores, and my heart tells me she is my own dear Rita! Am I right—am I right? Oh, I can't bear any more disappointments and I am coming to see for myself, so that you may expect me almost as soon as my letter; for as soon as papa can settle his business affairs here, we are returning to our own dear home to stay there, and I shall see you once again—you, dearer than all other girls in the world! Write to me, dear, at the enclosed address, San Francisco, for there is now no further excuse for hiding yourself from me.

“That man, Rita! Oh, can I ever write his name without trembling? But I shall—I do! Believe me, dear, it is only memory, a memory of what never existed, that makes me tremble; for I tell you truly from my heart, Rita, that Clarence Stanley is less than nothing to me now—not even a memory, not even a name! You dear girl! It was not worth breaking my heart and your own, too (for I know you have suffered equally in our separation), by running away from me, that he might see you no more. Rita, dearest, he never returned, neither to protest, excuse, make love to me again or attempt to win you from me! Gone at once he was, and forever; and, though it nearly killed me at the moment, I have since learned to kneel in gratitude to Heaven for saving me from such a man. He has married Olive Gaye, and together they must now be somewhere in England; though, strange to say, I hear nothing from Lady Clarence Stanley; perhaps she is waiting to send me her cards as the Countess of Windermere. And now, dearest, this will surely prove to you how unnecessary is further concealment on your part. Let me hear from you at once. The loss of you is an insupportable grief, Rita, for you



are dearer than any man can ever be to the longing,  
loving heart of "POLLY HAMILTON."

"And this man, then—this Clarence Stanley?" asked Moray, in utter bewilderment. "This is all so unlike our dear Clarence! Engaged to this young lady, false to her, false to Constance, and basely marrying a third? Oh, it cannot be!"

"Nor is it true, Harold," said Dolores, sadly and gravely. "Your sister's lover is dead; but she is more fortunate than my dear Polly, for she can mourn a true and honest lover and cherish his memory—"

"Dead! Clarence Stanley dead!" said Lord Harold. "Oh, poor Constance! It is cold comfort I must bring back to you, my sister! But who then *is* this man who has been masquerading as Clarence Stanley?"

Dolores turned an appealing look toward Van Tassel, and it was he who answered:

"His name is Carlos Mendoza, Lord Harold, and he is the man who killed your kinsman, Clarence Stanley."

"His murderer? Stanley murdered!" cried Moray, recoiling in horror.

"It was a fair fight—fair enough," said Van Tassel, gravely. "I was the sole witness, and I can tell you the story truly as it happened."





## CHAPTER XXXI.

### A GHOSTLY AVENGER.

About midway between the entrance to the Santiago Canyon and the picturesque residence of Mrs. Travers stands a very dilapidated, tumble-down old shanty, known as the Mexican's hut. Whoever the Mexican was to whom it originally belonged, and from whom it inherits this by no means distinctive appellation, he took particularly good care that it should inherit nothing else. The inside of the hut was as barren of anything as any four walls could possibly be; and though, occasionally, a centipede, a green and glittering lizard, a scorpion, a tarantula, or even a lurking rattler, on a voyage of discovery from the adjacent rocky hills and mountains, might invade its solitude, there was, as a rule, no living thing so forlorn as to think of taking up its abode there for any length of time. This was, no doubt, why it seemed, notwithstanding all other disadvantages, the very place most suited to the purpose of an enterprising couple who wished to explore the canyon with a secrecy which, for some days, they had sought in vain.

"This is the place, Olive," said Lord Clarence Stanley to his charming young wife. "It is entirely off the ordinary route; it is not more than half a mile distant from the spot; our presence here will be totally unsus-



pected, and as the man who drove us to the entrance of the canyon has returned to Santa Ana, and supposes that we are cranky tourists from the East who prefer to walk rather than ride to make our visit to the Travers people, we shall be absolutely undisturbed here for the rest of the day and evening."

"Ugh!" exclaimed Lady Clarence, holding up her skirts and stepping gingerly across the dry, earthen floor. "I hope there are no snakes nor horrid spiders nor things! Southern California may be an earthly paradise for those who like that sort of thing; but Gardens of Eden somehow always produce serpents; and for my part brown-stone palaces and civilization are good enough for me!"

"Oh, all right!" was the impatient rejoinder. "When we get through this business you can have all the palaces you want! Don't be absurd! There are neither snakes nor spiders; I have been all through the place carefully; and, except ourselves, there isn't a living creature anywhere about for miles in any direction."

While he spoke he had been opening a couple of camp-stools, which he now set down in the middle of the room, and alongside of them a lunch-basket.

"I have observed that you lose your temper when you are hungry, Olive, and as I shall want to draw on your full stock of amiability, perhaps I have taken the necessary precautions."

"Now, Clarence, that is really very nice and thoughtful of you," said Olive, laughing, "and as this canyon air is decidedly appetizing, I don't care how soon you open the basket."

Stanley looked about for something on which he could improvise a table; and going to a corner of the apartment he returned with a pick-axe and spade both



of which he stuck deep into the earthen floor, about three feet apart, and by means of some stout cord he hung the lunch basket by its handles between them.

"Now, madam," he said gayly, "if you will draw forward your chair, by means of this napkin spread over your knee, and this little goblet held in your dainty hand, you can help yourself from the swinging table, and I will fill your glass with the best wine of the country. It has a great reputation, I can assure you ; and if you are ignorant of the taste of Mumm or Pommery, it may pass for champagne."

Olive held out her goblet for the foaming wine, and, drinking to the success of their enterprise, declared the wine of the country to be a most excellent beverage ; and with laugh and jest these two regaled themselves with as hearty a meal, as thoroughly enjoyed, as if they had been seated at their hotel, many miles away.

"And now, Clarence, how soon will it be safe to set out in search of the hiding-place?"

The man consulted his watch and declared with some surprise that it was already five o'clock.

"Later than I thought, Olive ; and as I have to carry that heavy pick-axe and spade, perhaps we may as well start forth now. I don't think we shall meet any one, and the place being utterly secluded and, to judge by the appearance of it, never visited, I can begin work at once."

"The pick and spade have a rather ghastly look," said Olive, while her husband tied up the lunch-basket and secured the implements for his work. "It is mightily suggestive of grave-digging isn't it ! You will need be careful not to turn up the buried papa of your saintly Dolores instead of the other treasure. He must have been buried somewhere about here."



"Stop talking of her ! You are not fit to speak her name, Olive," said the man with brutal frankness.

His wife turned a furious look upon him and bit her lips hard to repress the bitter retort that rose to them. What was the matter with him ? He had been strangely defiant and independent all day. Well, she would wait till the business in hand was safely over, and then she would let him know who was master. Meantime, she would presently find a way of administering a gentle and timely rebuke.

"Well, then," she said amiably, "let's be going ; but this time I hope there is no mistake, Carlos ; this time we are really on sure grounds ? The real Richmond this time, eh ? Five have we slain instead of him !"

"'The real Richmond ?' 'Five !' What do you mean ?" he asked, testily, folding up the camp-chairs and putting them, with the luncheon-basket, into a corner of the apartment.

"Only a quotation from a well-known play, my dear Carlos, really. For an English gentleman, you are singularly ignorant of the literature of your country. You really must read up a bit before we go to England."

"Oh—ah—yes ! All right, I'll do so," and he caught up the pick and spade. Pausing a moment, he came back a step or two and faced the young woman, and it seemed to her that there was something strangely menacing in his face and manner.

"Olive," he said with an air of serene tranquility, that his wife had already learned to dread, "I want to remind you once more that you have a bad habit of forgetting my name. It comes of your infatuation about that scamp of a fellow, Carlos Mendoza ; and by the way, speaking of him, here is something that may interest you."



He drew a folded newspaper from his breast-pocket and gave it to her, indicating a particular paragraph.

"As you will see, it is a New York paper, a week old. I picked it up by chance, in the reading-room of the hotel, this morning. We have been rushing about so that many items of news must have escaped us."

Olive took the paper. With a sinking of the heart, for which she could not account she didn't look at it immediately.

"Yes, Clarence, we have been driving about, and wasting an immense deal of valuable time; but it couldn't be helped. No one could imagine there were so many Santiago Canyons in California. It seems to be a favorite name; those old Spaniards must have doted on Saint James. How many have we explored? This is the sixth, isn't it?"

"Yes, the sixth; but no mistake this time. I have found the sycamores, the figure of the Indian woman everything precisely according to description; I have measured the distances, and I know the very spot into which I must strike my pick-axe; and, by Jove, I long to get at it!"

He strode through the doorway and out into the bright light. Olive followed him, the paper rustling nervously in her hand; it had been too dark within the hut to see the print clearly, and she paused a moment now, with the full light on the page, and her glance roved quickly through the paragraph which her husband had pointed out to her:



## MYSTERIOUS TRAGEDY.

“GROUNDLESS SUSPICION AGAINST THE UNKNOWN  
CARLOS MENDOZA.

“Baron Von Helmholtz Found Dead On His Wife’s Grave in Greenwood—Suicide—Shot Through the Heart—A Letter Found On His Person in Which He Confessed Himself the Murderer Through Jealousy of His Beautiful Wife—His Own Death, and Confession the Expiation of His Crime.”

A sigh that was almost a groan of despairing disappointment on the part of the reader accented the conclusion of this unexpected paragraph. The man, who was a little way ahead, turned and looked at his wife, and seeing her pale, almost livid, with wide, wild eyes, he smiled pleasantly.

“Clarence,” she murmured, “then it was *not* Van Tassel after all?”

“Evidently not. Van was a blind fool at all times, and he must have dropped the dagger there when he made the first attempt. The baron picked it up, and apparently knew how and when to use it.”

Olive ground her little white teeth together. She had forever lost the hold she had so triumphed in possessing over her husband, who threw back his head and made a pretense of loosening his collar button as if suddenly relieved of an uncomfortable pressure about the neck.

“Any way, your hypnotic suggestion was ‘no good,’ ” she said, with a wicked little laugh.

“Not a bit,” returned her husband merrily. “Your jealous suggestion knocked it all out. It was you, little girl, that lighted the fuse that fired that mine, and so



adieu, baron, Celestine and Carlos Mendoza ! Adieu, adieu, forever !”

Olive crumpled the newspaper into a tight wad and flung it viciously into a clump of sage-brush.

“But Van Tassel ?” she said, presently. “Since it was *not* he, and since he disappeared with the Mendoza, where are they ?”

“Echo answers : ‘Where ?’” returned her companion, with insolent composure. “When I am through with this night’s work it will be time enough to think of them.”

Olive made no reply. For the first time in her life she felt that fate had let go of her hand ; and she walked on beside the man she had accounted her slave, with the new and very bitter conviction growing upon her that he would henceforth be her master.

The minutes passed silently and slowly. For nearly half an hour neither spoke ; but at last Olive said, wearily :

“It is terribly hot ! I am very tired !”

“Tired ? Pooh ! Pooh ! I shall need you to encourage me !” returned Stanley. “Think of the work that I have to do, and you complaining already ! But it *is* hot ! Olive, you are right. We shall soon be there, however ; and it is the coolest place in the whole canyon, when we get there—cool as a vault, a veritable burying-place.”

“Stop !” his wife exclaimed shrilly. “You make me nervous ! However, even a vault would be welcome after this torrid heat. Oh, the air is fairly stifling !”

“Rest a moment, then,” said her companion, with a sudden inflection of sympathy in his voice, and dropping the pick and spade, points downward, against the ground ; “it is confoundedly hot, and we have been walking too fast !”



They both glanced around, and a cool breeze from the west blew toward them.

"See, the sun is sinking," said Olive; "what a lurid, fiery sunset, and what a strange, sulphurous smell the air has, though it is blowing cooler already."

"It always turns cool here immediately the sun sinks," returned Stanley, again shouldering his pick and spade. "California beats the world for unexpectedness; you never know what will happen next! But, come on, I want to get well started before the daylight is gone, and then I can keep on well enough till the moon rises—she must be about the second quarter by this time—Halloa! What is that? Can those be figures moving on that mountain? People or cattle, which is it?"

Olive looked as he directed, and distinctly saw two figures, a man and a woman, on the brow of a mountain that in the clear, still, deceptive light, seemed but a few yards away; and instinctively she drew closer to her husband.

"If they should see us?" she whispered.

"They can't; we are concealed in this hollow; their figures stand out right against the sky. They must be in want of exercise to take such a climb in this heat."

The slight figure of the woman moved and turned toward the man—it was Dolores—and at that moment she was saying:

"Mrs. Travers managed it all, and I have scarcely known anything about it. She has been so kind. Dear mamma—it was a dream I never hoped to realize, and to-morrow they will place all that remains of her in the same grave with papa; it is so right and fitting that it should be to-morrow, because that is the anniversary of papa's death."

"The 12th of October, is it, dearest? That will



indeed be a fitting anniversary. Perhaps the troubled spirit of our Indian ancestor will rest from that time."

"Perhaps so," said Dolores, seriously. "I hope you won't think it very fanciful, Harold, but I want to walk to the sycamores to-night."

"If you are equal to it, Dolores ; it is so very sultry."

"Not more so than it has been for several days," she answered, reassuringly. "What we call earthquake-weather in California—only the earthquakes seldom come when we are looking for them. We will go by this path round the mountain, and so down into the valley."

She put her hand within his, and they disappeared round the brow of the mountain.

"There ! They have gone !" said Olive, who had been silently watching the two dark figures, like silhouettes against the clear evening light. "I am not sure if they were real or merely visionary, Clarence ; for whom do you think they looked like to me ?"

"I am sure I can't guess," he returned. "But here we are at last. Behold, there are the mystic sycamores. Count them for yourself. One, two, three ! So there are twelve, aren't there ?"

"Yes," responded, Olive, in her suddenly awakened interest, forgetting all about the two figures that had seemed so strangely familiar. "At last and beyond a doubt we have come to the right place now."

And she ran quickly forward, quite oblivious of her late fatigue ; and looking closely at the separated trunks all growing from a single root, she quickly found the one on which had been carved the outline of the Indian woman's figure.

"There she is !" cried Olive, in triumph, "The poor Gold-Flower herself, unhappy victim to a wasted love ! And only see, Clarence ! Some one has shot an arrow



straight through her heart ! An Indian arrow it must have been. How strong and tipped with some hard metal ! The point is standing straight out from the wood ?”

“Be careful !” exclaimed her husband, reaching her at a stride. “Don’t touch the cursed thing ! It may be poisoned ! They always are !”

Olive felt a thrill of delighted surprise. He was alarmed for her safety. After all, then, he really cared for her. But in a moment the feeling passed, as she remembered that it was not *her* he loved, but himself ; for without her he was powerless to deceive Toddlekins, the one only being who could not be deceived in any way. She sighed bitterly and then reflected that, at least, it was well to know that she was valued and just how much.

She sat down upon a little mound at a distance, all unconscious that it was the grave of the father whose memory was so dearly cherished by Dolores ; and from that, his last resting-place, she watched her husband strike his pick-axe into the ground that covered the treasure of the buried Mendozas.

A slow quarter of an hour went by, then another ; and fast and steadily fell the blows of the pick-axe in the dry, sandy, pebbly ground. The man who wielded it had learned the business well in many a mining-camp, and all his old-time expertness and strength came back to him now ; and as he tossed aside the pick and catching up the spade shoveled out the loose earth, he glanced occasionally, with a slight, triumphant laugh, toward Olive.

But, on a sudden, he uttered a strange, hoarse cry, and the spade dropped from his hand ; a chill, curdling, cold sensation, as if ice had been dropped down his back, made him shiver ; and then he stood gaping,



stupidly silent, horribly gaping straight ahead of him on through the gathering dusk ; his gaze seemed turned to fire, as if it would burn through the thing at which it looked.

"Clarence ! Clarence !" cried Olive, as she rushed to him and seized his stiff, motionless arm. "What is it ? What is the matter ? Are you hurt ?

"There ! There !" whispered the hoarse voice. "Do you see nothing !"

"Nothing," answered Olive, a horrible chill of some unknown, unformulated fear causing her teeth to rattle against one another as she spoke. Then, with an almost heroic effort to throw off this bodiless terror, she continued :

"Nothing, Clarence ; there is absolutely nothing but the sycamore trees and the miserable presentment of the Indian woman. Come, be a man ! Cheer up ! Take again your pick and spade, delve a little deeper, and soon, very soon, you will uncover the treasure that will make a king and queen of you and me ; for with such wealth we can do anything !"

"By Heaven, you are a bold girl, Olive, and well worth working for !"

She stooped, and snatching at the pick, put it into his hand.

The man set to work again vigorously ; and pounding the earth with all his strength, the point of the pick suddenly struck, with a ringing sound, against some metallic surface. At the same moment, there was a rocking, swaying motion that seemed to shake the earth to its foundation. Olive uttered a shrill shriek of terror, and the next moment she felt herself flung violently forward, and she fell, clutching at the loose earth and gravel. But only for a minute. Struggling to her feet again she rushed toward her husband.



“Clarence !” she screamed. “What is it ? Oh, if you are a man, help me, save me !”

But Clarence Stanley stood motionless, stricken, paralyzed—one frozen, rigid arm stretched into space, the extended fingers pointing outward, and the voice, like that of a gibbering idiot, muttering incoherent babble :

“Yes, yes—the wrong Indian woman ! She—she—she ! Her curse weighs me down ! See, oh, see ! Her avenging spirit calls me away !”

Olive looked. Her frenzied gaze followed the line of those outstretched frozen fingers, and there, before them, she seemed to see a luminous face, with burning eyes shining through a translucent mist. She shrieked aloud and, turning, fled ; and then the earth heaved again and shook and yawned like some great monster ; and after that, all was still.

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## CHAPTER XXXII.

THE TWELFTH OF OCTOBER, 1892.

Dolores and Moray had almost reached the group of sycamores when the first earthquake shock was felt. They had loitered, with the indifference of lovers as to the flight of time, on their slow and winding walk ; and it was the purple dusk of the California twilight, soon to be pierced by the silvery splendor of an early-rising moon. But as yet no moon was visible ; there was a strange, still oppressiveness in the air ; the dusky twilight seemed to deepen and thicken, and Dolores suddenly stopped and clung to the arm on which she had



been leaning, while a slight shudder, as of some impending calamity, shook her from head to foot.

"What a curious night ! There is something vaguely threatening and awful in this atmosphere. The moon is surely very late in showing her fair, bright face to-night."

"She is always kind to lovers," said Moray, laughing, and stooping to press his lips on the rippling, silken hair that was being blown against his face. A slight breeze had risen suddenly, but it was not cool ; it seemed, indeed, hot and laden with a sulphurous odor.

"What is that sound ?" asked Dolores. "Do you hear it, Harold ? It is like some heavy weight pounding the ground."

"Yes, it is. Perhaps the ghost walks to-night. This is her anniversary," he answered lightly. "But she can hardly be digging a grave. Ghosts are more inclined to get out of them. That is surely the sound of a pick-axe."

"Oh, Harold ! Harold !"

Dolores gave a quick, sharp cry of sudden irrepressible terror, and her lover's arms closed around her with the instinct of protection ; and then, for what might have been a minute or an hour, they stood clinging to each other, while the ground seemed no longer solid earth, but a quaking bog. It shook, it rocked, it trembled—and then slowly it settled into quiet and was still—awfully still, leaving on the minds of those who had felt the shock a provoking impression of having suffered from some huge, practical joke.

"I suppose this is what you call an earthquake, in this astonishing country," said Lord Harold, presently.

"Yes," said Dolores rather tremulously ; "I don't think it is over ; it will come again."



The words had scarcely passed her lips when a second shock almost flung them off the ground. It was much more violent than the first. There was a wild confusion in the air ; spots of light seemed to dart like electric flashes, to and fro ; great cracks and fissures opened in the ground ; there was the crash as of trees uprooted. And through all this noisy outbreak of nature's hidden passions came the sound of wild, excited, human voices, and one prolonged thrilling shriek.

After that, another long silence. Dolores did not speak for many minutes, nor did her companion ; but he held her, calmly, closely, strongly to his breast, and though she trembled it was only a nervous tremor. He knew that she was not afraid.

Suddenly the air cleared, as if some great wing had cleft it asunder, and the moon's splendor burst forth with a light almost as brilliant as that of day.

"It is over now," said Dolores. "Let us go on, Harold. Oh, look there ! The sycamores have been torn up by the roots, and the trunks lie strewed upon the ground !"

They hurried forward, talking excitedly.

"I heard voices !" said one.

"Yes, I heard them, too," returned the other, "and a shriek of terror !"

"It was a woman's voice ! Ah, Harold ! Harold !"

For at that moment they stumbled and nearly fell over the prostrate form of a man who lay, pinned to the earth, by one of the great trunks of the sycamore tree, which had fallen all across him. The pick-axe he had been using was still in his grasp, and the spade had been flung to a little distance.

The face was partly uncovered, and the wild, wide-open, glassy eyes stared up at Dolores as she bent down over him.



The same thought had come both to Dolores and Moray, and she answered his now, as if he had spoken it aloud :

"Yes," she said, "it is he ! The man who called himself Clarence Stanley. In some way he must have found the clew to the Mendoza treasure, and he was digging for it when the earthquake overtook him. Wretched man ! He has paid the penalty—he is quite dead—and, oh, Harold, is it not like Fate itself, or the visible hand of Heaven ? How horrible ! How awful !"

She covered her face with her hands and turned away shaken and shuddering.

And, truly, something very strange and awful had occurred.

The sycamore, in falling, had flung that part of the trunk on which was carved the outline of the Indian woman's figure in such a way, that it fell with all its force against the head of her cruel and treacherous descendant ; and, with that tremendous blow, the point of the arrow-head had been driven into the center of the black, heart-shaped mole through the temple, and crashing into the cunning, strong, wicked brain beneath, as the nail of Jael had smitten Sisera.

"He is past all help or further punishment," said Moray, drawing Dolores gently away from the fatal spot. "Let me take you home, dearest ; we will send men here at once to do all that is left to do, now. But the woman ! It must have been his wife that was with him ; it was certainly a woman's voice that gave that terrible cry !"

"Nothing will hurt Olive Gaye !" said Dolores, bitterly. "Such people are like cats ; they always alight on their feet. But we will look about for her, Harold, since she is a woman."

"I will take you home first, Dolores."



But long before they reached the house, they were met by Mr. and Mrs. Travers and a troop of their work-people, who were out in search of them ; and the brief excitement following the earthquake having already subsided, the men were more than willing for a new and more legitimate excitement in extricating the body of the dead man from the fallen tree, which had served as an avenging thunderbolt to the spirit of the long-forgotten Indian princess.

The brilliant light of a new morning was shining on the wreck of the sycamore trees before the *débris* of the earthquake and the body of the dead had been taken away, and no trace had been found of the dead man's wife, although diligent search had been made in every direction ; and Mrs. Travers, with Dolores, having been assured that all signs of the recent tragedy had been removed, stood beside the spot where the false Clarence Stanley and still more false Carlos Mendoza had met his death.

"What an exquisite morning !" said Dolores. "It is difficult to realize that it has risen over such a night of horror. The beautiful sky smiles as if it looked on a new world—just as it smiled on that great man, four hundred years ago, who gave a new world to mankind."

"Yes, dear," said Mrs. Travers, standing by the edge of the great trench that had been opened, first by the pick and spade, and afterward torn asunder by the earthquake ; "and here at last lies the great Mendoza treasure, uncovered in all its glory, and smiling back with a thousand brilliant, glittering eyes ! Look ! Look ! Everybody come here ! The lid has been shaken from the box, and just see the river of precious stones that flash back the light from every corner !"

"Yes," said Dolores, gravely ; "that must be the treasure. I had forgotten it."



Mr. Travers, who had come quickly in answer to his wife's shrill cries, now stooped and picked up some pieces of dull, yellowish stone and earth, with here and there bright specks that flashed like yellow light.

"Yes," he said, musingly, "the Mendoza treasure, indeed. This opens a vein that will lead to the discovery of the great lost mine of the Santiago Canyon. A myth it has been thought by mining-men, but a fact, as this will prove ; and this bit of land, for several acres round about, belongs to the Señorita Mendoza, the last and only remaining portion of all that once belonged to her father.

Mrs. Travers caught Dolores in a close embrace and hugged her till she begged for mercy.

"Oh, you darling girl ! You great bonanza ! You will have jewels outrivaling the revenue of an emperor !"

"Give me the hearts of those I love !" exclaimed Dolores, smiling through happy tears. "They are the jewels that gold can never buy, and their luster is brightest in clouds and darkness."

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## CHAPTER XXXIII.

### ORANGE - BLOSSOMS.

The beauty of a bride is proverbial, but even among brides it is rare to see such beauty as that of Dolores on her wedding-day.

Lord Moray had entreated for an early date for the marriage ; for he desired to return at once to England, that he might be present, with the only comfort of love



and sympathy, when his sister learned of her lover's death ; and Dolores could find no word of refusal.

She did not wish, indeed, to find any ; their love was perfect ; a flower of Paradise which could neither wither nor improve. There was no cause for delaying the marriage, and it was Mrs. Travers who asked for a reasonable time to elapse.

A bride could *not* be married without a *trousseau*, she declared, and such a bride ? Dolores should have a *trousseau* worthy of her beauty and of the Mendoza treasure. And such a *trousseau*, it was easy to see, could not be procured in a day.

And Mrs. Travers had her way, as her husband remarked she generally did, since she took it if it wasn't given to her.

But Dolores found happiness even in this delay ; for Polly Hamilton had speedily followed her letter, as she had promised to do ; and, as Mrs. Travers declared, any lover less perfect than Lord Harold would have been jealous, even though his rival was only a girl. For herself, she announced that she was furiously jealous, or should have been if she hadn't almost fallen in love with Polly Hamilton also. For Polly was once more the gay, sweet, ardent, hopeful girl she had been of old ; perhaps more gentle, more subdued than formerly, but with the repose of a fine nature that has learned its own strength through suffering, and with the humility of gratitude for a most fortunate escape from great danger and sorrow.

The days and weeks passed as in a delightful dream ; a happiness so deep and tranquil, that even its excess did not alarm.

"The chief bridesmaid is almost as lovely as the bride," said Mr. Travers, on the wedding-day.

Polly and Dolores, a little apart from all others, not



admitting even the bridegroom at this farewell communion, were clinging to each other in the embrace of parting love ; each feeling this to be the only painful moment they had known since their reunion.

" You must stop admiring Polly Hamilton," Mrs. Travers said, laughing, " or I shall be jealous. I never knew you so enthusiastic about any girl since—since—"

" Since I courted you, my dear," returned her husband. " Yes, Nell, I think her delightful ; much too good and lovely to be wearing the willow for that atrocious ruffian who jilted her and met with such a fitting end to all his treacherous villainy."

" Oh, she isn't !" exclaimed his wife. " Don't suppose it. Polly Hamilton is heart-whole, though she may have been shaken a little, but not enough to harm her. She is just the kind of woman to profit by an experience such as she has had, and few girls fall in love with the right man the first time. All women are not so fortunate, sir, as *your* wife has been."

And Mrs. Travers would have been confirmed in her opinion could she have heard the words Polly was then saying to Dolores.

" You are the angel of my life, Rita," said Polly, " and never more so than when you were the means of saving me from a fate worse than death had I learned too late the awful truth about that man—"

" Let us not speak of him, dear," said Dolores. " Let his memory die, as an ugly dream scared away by the joy of waking."

\* \* \* \* \*

" And *she* will be the Countess of Windermere !" said Mrs. Hamilton to her husband. " Well, since it was not to be Polly, I don't know but it is next best to have



the title borne by Dolores. She will grace it and honor it."

"She will grace and honor anything," said Mr. Hamilton. "But you must not be too sure that she will ever wear the Windermere coronet."

"What do you mean?" exclaimed his wife.

"Just this, my dear: My latest letters from England mention, incidentally, that the old earl is about to marry again. There will soon be a new Countess of Windermere; and, for a time, at least, Dolores may be barred out."

"The old earl—he must be in his dotage!" said Mrs. Hamilton.

"Very likely," was the amused reply; "but that makes things only more easy for Olive Gaye."

"Olive Gaye! That girl! After all—oh, surely Heaven cannot be so unjust!"

"Heaven has little to do with such people," returned her husband, grimly. "But Fate or the Devil or something of that sort is very favorable to the Becky Sharps of this world."

"O-h!" exclaimed Mrs. Hamilton, with a long-drawn sigh of indignation too deep for words. "Well, at least she will prove the worst punishment the old man can ever meet with for his folly."

"Yes, that is where the justice of Heaven comes in. But look, dear; there is the last glimpse of the carriage that is bearing Dolores and her husband away toward their new home."

"I see it. How bright the sun is shining about them, and how clear the sky! God bless her! God bless them both! May all their skies be bright in the days to come!"

THE END.



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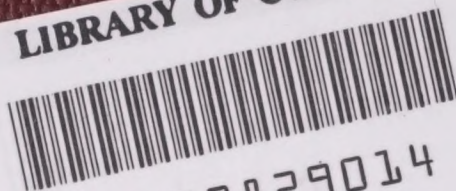








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